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Israelamok: What Next? • 'Rogue Operation,' My Foot

Wolf Blitzer *George A. Carver, Jr.*

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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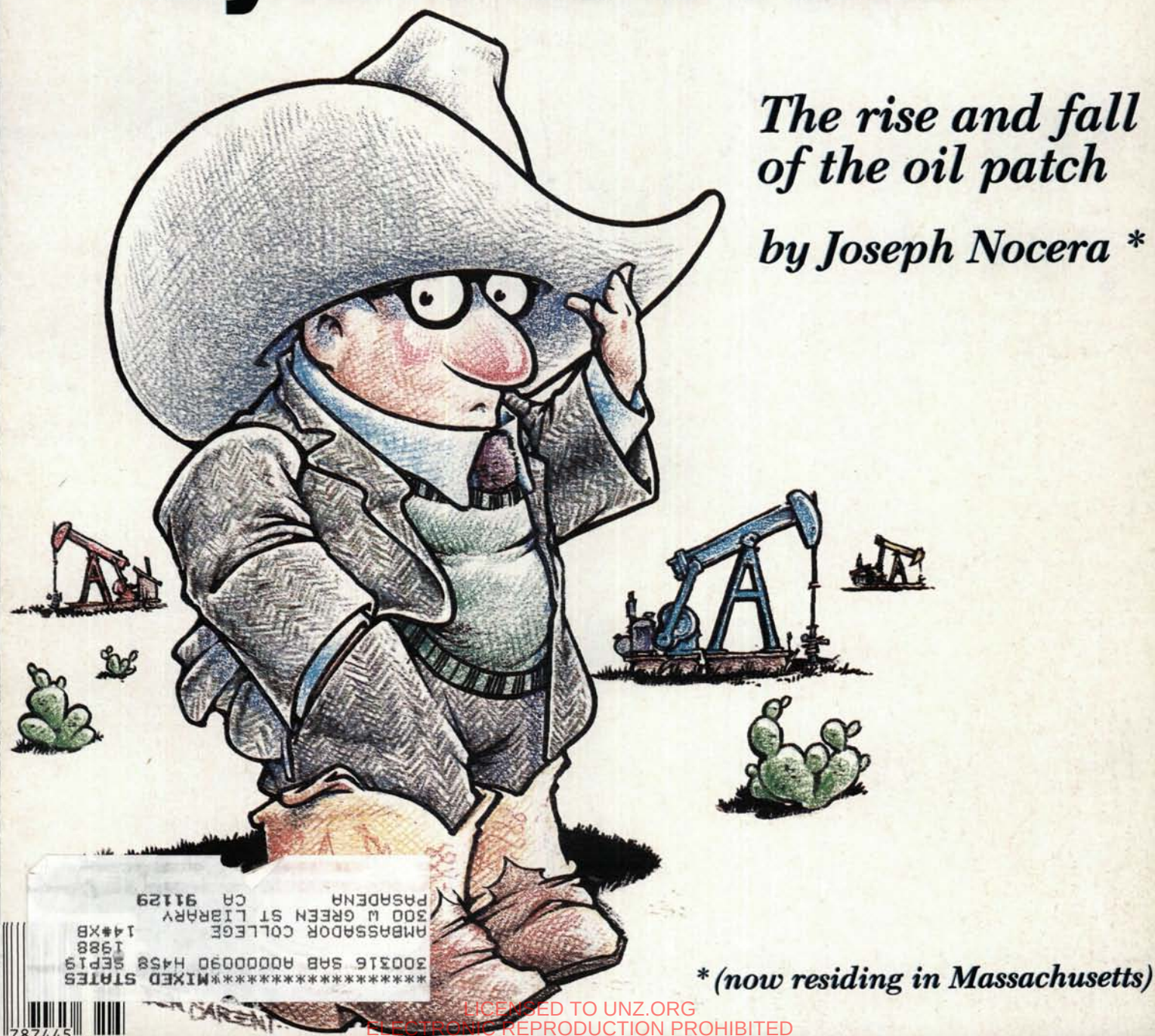
My Life as a Texan



The rise and fall of the oil patch

*by Joseph Nocera **

*** (now residing in Massachusetts)***

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

TALKING TOUGH

"We are losing our foreign markets, because whenever we begin to do a trade the door is slammed in our faces.... [And] as if that was not enough, these same foreigners who shut us out invade our markets and take work out of the hands of our working people.... We are [about] to lose the great industries for which this country has been celebrated, which have made it prosperous...."

Richard Gephardt, 1987? No, a British politician named Joseph Chamberlain (father of Neville) back around the turn of the century, complaining about—among others—that rising industrial star to the west, the United States. Yet no one would claim, looking back, that foreign protectionism had anything much to do with Britain's long industrial decline. Xenophobic panic and demands to stop the flood of imports were symptoms of that decline, symptoms of a nation that couldn't come to grips with its economic problems.

The United Auto Workers have been running a television commercial purporting to look back on America from the perspective of the future. An old man huddled in a blanket in a bare room bemoans the politicians' failure to "do something" in 1987 about foreign imports. Other ads in the $2 million UAW campaign call upon citizens to "*stand up* for America" and "*require* foreign nations to reduce their trade surpluses." Although one UAW ad asserts that America makes "the best product at the best price in the world," and blames our troubles on foreign trade barriers, another ad says exactly the opposite—"Sure we can import almost everything cheaper today"—but argues that Americans shouldn't have to compete with cheap foreign labor.

The political strategy behind these ads is to make trade policy a matter of patriotism and machismo. One ad even echoes Jeane Kirkpatrick's attack on "the 'blame America' crowd," with its implication that anyone who disagrees (remember the "San Francisco Democrats"?) is a pansy. The script for one of the UAW's radio commercials calls for the anti-protectionist case to be stated by a "plummy voice . . . sounds erudite." Get it?

Columnist Mark Shields recently urged Democrats to use the trade issue to steal patriotism back from President Reagan. "The president is willing to sacrifice . . . American workers on the altar of an abstraction. The United States has become a patsy." Shields also sees trade as a "human rights" issue. He calls imports "the work product of exploited foreign labor" produced in countries with "obscene contempt" for decent labor standards.

Representative Gephardt, Jesse Jackson, Senator Joe Biden, and former Governor Bruce Babbitt all plan to make "tough" trade policy a centerpiece of their presidential campaigns. In fact, the accusation that Reagan is devoted to the principle of free trade is a bum rap. He has been the most protectionist president in decades. In 1980 only an eighth of American imports entered this country under some kind of restrictive policy. Today it's close to a quarter.

Of course Reagan's protectionism hasn't "saved jobs," any more than the fiercer Democratic version would. Protectionism costs jobs. The best example comes from the UAW's own industry. Reagan introduced import quotas on Japanese cars in 1981. By 1983, according to Robert Crandall of Brookings, the quota had raised the price of a car by about $1,000. This saved 26,200 jobs in the American auto industry, at a cost to consumers of $160,000 per job "saved." That's $160,000 consumers couldn't spend elsewhere, or save. Can anyone doubt that sucking $160,000 out of the rest of the economy destroyed more than one job?

Protectionism is not a question of workers' jobs versus yuppies' BMWs. It's a question of one worker's job versus another worker's job. The eternal political problem for free traders is that the benefit of protectionism is concentrated and identifiable, while the cost—though just as real, not "abstract" at all, and undoubtedly larger—is diffuse and impossible to pinpoint. The eternal hypocrisy of protectionists is to pretend that their concern is for American exports while their real motivation is blocking foreign imports. Will the UAW stop complaining about Japanese cars when Japan opens its doors to American farm products?

The crocodile tears for "exploited" foreign workers are hypocrisy squared. American-level labor standards are a luxury of affluence. If we'd had them during our own underdeveloped days, we'd still be underdeveloped. More to the point, the UAW's goal isn't to raise the wages and improve the working conditions of South Koreans. It's to put South Koreans out of work. Meanwhile, the products of cheap foreign labor don't threaten American affluence. What threatens our affluence is paying people $20 to produce what we can import for two dollars, instead of finding them more productive work to do.

The current fad among protectionists is a variety of schemes that would transfer the burden of enforcement to the offending foreigners. Rather than imposing trade barriers on specific goods, we would simply tell Japan, Germany, et al., to reduce their trade surpluses in any way they wish, under penalty of draconian tariffs on all their exports if they don't. Gephardt and Babbitt are pushing slightly different versions of this approach. Babbitt, in a common protectionist ploy, presents his plan as an *alternative* to protectionism—a way to fend off the hotheads with really bad ideas. Gephardt also denies that his plan is "protectionist."

There is no practical difference between the Gephardt-Babbitt approach and classical protectionism. A trade restraint has precisely the same economic effect whether it is imposed by the buyer or by the seller. In a way, the Gephardt-Babbitt technique is worse, since it abandons any pretense that our trade barriers are a response to their trade barriers. Foreigners are told to stop selling us more than they buy from us, never mind why and never mind how.

Since artificial barriers aren't really to blame for our trade deficit, Japan and Germany would have to meet the Gephardt-Babbitt demand by curtailing their exports. That is, by refusing to sell Americans things we wish to buy at prices we wish to pay. If every trade-deficit nation followed suit, the result would be a spiraling world economic contraction. National trade accounts would be in balance, all right—at zero, or something close to it.

The new language of the protectionists is Orwellian. They talk about getting "tough" and "making America strong," while they prescribe weakness and defeat. There's nothing patriotic about asking a large group of Americans to sacrifice its jobs and prosperity for the benefit of a smaller group of Americans. There's nothing macho about cowering behind trade barriers.

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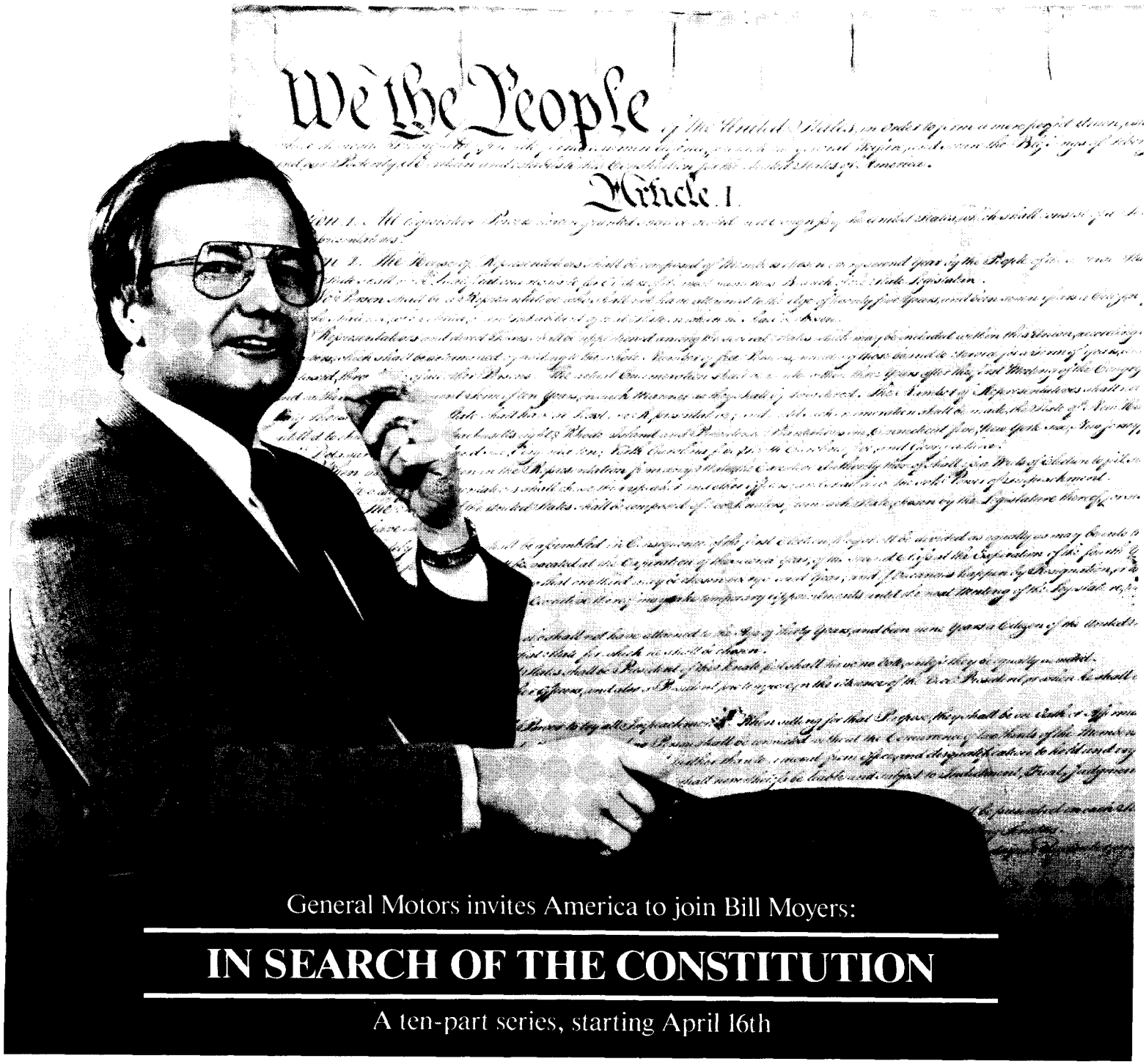

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CORRESPONDENCE

MORE TO OVERCOME

To the editors:

As a black woman, I read with keen interest Bayard Rustin's sagacious analysis of the meaning of the King holiday ("The King to Come," March 9). Particularly noteworthy was his incisive distinction between the "old form of racism," based solely on color, and the post-Civil Rights era manifestations, which equate color with criminality. The reason young blacks are not buzzed into exclusive shops isn't because of color per se, but because in the current social climate color has become automatically associated with anti-social behavior. At least part of the blame for this attitude must fall on the mainstream black leaders who, unlike Mr. Rustin, continue to equate the pathology of the underclass with race rather than poverty. By harping on the need for an agenda to deal exclusively with the problems of the black poor, they inadvertently foster the impression that such things as family dissolution, illegitimacy, and substance abuse are endemic to blacks alone. This approach fuels racism by implying that blacks, even after civil rights legislation, affirmative action, etc., are inherently incapable of making it in society. By failing to see the issue in terms of class rather than race, black leaders open the door for society to project ghetto pathology on all blacks.

JOANNA KINGLAND
New York, New York

To the editors:

Bayard Rustin writes, "Lincoln's legacy was a miasma of hatred and resentment that made it impossible ever to achieve the political consensus necessary to establish a Lincoln national holiday." Mr. Rustin notwithstanding, Lincoln's legacy was to provide us with a single country in which to work out the "miasma" that was not only the result of war, but a cause of it as well. The King holiday makes a useful weapon against racism—and we still need weapons, not celebrations. But no one is served by building up King at Lincoln's expense.

MARK M. PETERS
Peirce City, Missouri

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GARMENT I

To the editors:

Since his return from Bethesda Naval Hospital, former national security adviser Robert McFarlane has rejected dozens of media requests. He has given only one radio interview, one newspaper interview, and one television interview. He has done so because his role remains crucial to the nation's understanding of an ongoing political crisis. Yet your March 30 "Notebook" item criticizes him for having done even this.

Mr. McFarlane's credibility and character were impugned for months in the Iran matter. He has a very concrete legal and reputational interest in making sure that his side of the story—in significant part vindicated by the recent Tower report—gets out. He also has a very strong personal interest in moving his life forward once again as he recovers from a near personal tragedy, and in demonstrating to friends and others that the event was neither a terminal blow nor an embarrassment to be left festering in the closet. I believe the public, if not TNR, appreciates what he has been through and wishes him well in his attempts to resume a normal life.

LEONARD GARMENT
Counsel to Robert McFarlane
Washington, D.C.

GARMENT II

To the editors:

I dispute your editorial contention that my client, Robert McFarlane, was "fully aware" in 1985 of Oliver North's *contra*-related activities ("White House Outlaws," March 23). Although it is too late to dissuade you from drawing that conclusion, I hope you will note that the Tower Commission report recites some facts and documents, avowedly incomplete, on the *contra* matter and desists from reaching any conclusions about them. Nor did the commission ask Mr. McFarlane more than one or two general questions on this subject. The full testimony and documentary context now under formal investigation will establish quite clearly, I believe, that Mr. McFarlane's testimony on the *contra* matter, as on the Iran matter, was entirely truthful.

LEONARD GARMENT
Washington, D.C.
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
APRIL 13, 1987

OIL SLICK

Cheap oil is a blessing for the American economy. It means more jobs, lower interest rates, and lower inflation. But judging by the way people are talking in Washington, you'd think lower oil prices were some kind of Communist plot. In recent weeks a chorus of industry lobbyists, think tank experts, and Reagan administration officials such as Interior Secretary Donald Hodel have been emitting a steady stream of warnings about the *threat* posed by last year's $10-per-barrel drop in the world oil price, and its sluggish climb back since then. The very security of the Free World, they say, could be in jeopardy.

What gives? The oil industry's motives aren't any mystery. 1986 was a terrible year for U.S. oil: 150,000 workers lost their jobs, and major companies reported huge drops in their earnings (no outright losses, though). The industry, which used to lecture the rest of the country about the virtues of the free market back when it was enjoying a windfall from higher OPEC-enforced prices in the '70s, now finds itself in need of government action to shore up prices.

Of course, the industry and its friends in the policy shops, Congress, and the administration try not to emphasize self-interested arguments. They're concentrating on the national security case. The current price of about $18 per barrel is unlikely to rise soon to the level at which American producers can profitably maintain current levels of output (about $22 per barrel, or more). That means another likely contraction in U.S. production this year—probably about as big as last year's nine percent drop. Imports would increase, too: last year they grew from 31 percent of total consumption to 38 percent. If these trends continue, we could find ourselves even more dependent on imports than we were back before the OPEC embargo of 1973. And a growing share of those imports is likely to come from the Persian Gulf, which contains most of the world's remaining easy-to-get-to oil. This would place our country's economy in the hands of the Ayatollah, et al.

How clear and present is this danger? A recent study of the problem by the Energy Department notes that big disruptions in the supply of oil are not likely soon, because there are ten million barrels of excess production capacity available now. It's hard to make a price hike stick during a glut, as OPEC has been finding out. This margin of safety will diminish in the 1990s, however, as the world uses more oil. Still, the West is much better prepared to respond to supply disruptions in the 1990s than it was in the 1970s, thanks to deregulated markets and built-up emergency stocks—which are now sufficient to ride out a disruption even larger than that of the 1970s. The West's preparedness deters oil producers from trying a cutoff in the first place. Why should they pinch if they can't make us cry "uncle"?

Nevertheless, prudence does dictate that we do whatever we can to defend ourselves against any future oil shocks. Whether or not foreign producers would adopt a massive price increase or embargo as a matter of conscious policy, there is always a chance that such a scenario might develop willy-nilly. The Iran-Iraq war, or some other conflict among Middle Eastern nations, could at any moment result in the sudden disabling or destruction of Persian Gulf oil production or transport. But the point isn't that there's no need to worry, only that we shouldn't let legitimate concerns about the country's energy future turn into a panic that will result in policies that do more harm than good.

One such bad idea is restoring the oil depletion allowance tax break, as proposed by Energy Secretary John Herrington. The oil depletion allowance is deducted directly from gross income, so it is translated immediately into profit. Under current law, only independent oil producers are eligible for this illogical special break, which gives them a deduction of 15 percent on the income from the first 1,000 barrels pumped per day. Herrington would let all companies, majors and independents alike, partake of this deduction—and raise it to 27.5 percent on the income from *all* oil and gas from newly developed wells. Herrington claims this would boost production—the equivalent of 370,000 new barrels per day by 1992. But it would cost American taxpayers at least $1 billion over the next five years, and

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violate the fledgling spirit of tax reform for the sake of what is essentially a subsidy to oil barons.

The proposal generating the most attention on Capitol Hill, however, is an oil import fee—a flat, per-barrel tariff on all oil that comes from abroad. U.S. producers can't compete with foreign sources at the current $18-per-barrel price, but they could if a government tariff automatically raised the price of all imports. Since oil is oil, an import fee would force up domestic prices by an identical amount. Like all protectionist measures, however, it would do so at the expense of everyone else. A $10-per-barrel fee sustained for the next ten years would save 120,000 oil jobs and destroy 400,000 jobs elsewhere, according to the Energy Department's figures. This is not to mention the permanent inflationary effects; putting a floor under the domestic oil price puts a floor under the price of all competing forms of energy (natural gas, coal, etc.), too. The added drag on our economy from an import fee would also make the U.S. economy less competitive as compared to Europe and Japan.

A $10-per-barrel import fee would cost American consumers $40 billion a year, according to the Energy Department study. Of this, $10 billion would go to the government from the fee itself and $30 billion would go to domestic producers. The Energy Department estimates that such a fee would reduce our import requirements by 1.5 million barrels a day. Of this, a million barrels would come from conservation and only a half million from increased production. In other words, the $30 billion annual subsidy to domestic producers would be costing us $164 for every extra barrel of oil produced.

Clearly promoting conservation is a far more efficient way to reduce imports than subsidizing domestic production. An import fee does both, but at a disproportionate

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	PAPER TIGERS	4	21
2.	BAD BLOOD	*	12
3.	HOSTS ON HIGH	—	1
4.	BUSH WHACKED	7	5
5.	LION OF THE DESERT	*	2
6.	CRUZ MISSILE	*	5
7.	BORN AGAIN	*	5
8.	DECLINE OF THE SOUTH	—	1
9.	CROWDED NESTS	—	1
10.	SINKING OF THE NAUTILUS	*	2

1. PAPER TIGERS 4 21

Iranamok. Following Howard Baker's first presidential press conference, press behavior has emerged as the scandal's current focus. This kind of navel-gazing—somebody always plays the Simpson role—usually signals an issue's final stretch. The Hill's decision to combine hearings demonstrates that investigators are now playing defense.

2. BAD BLOOD * 12

AIDS. The late advent of AZT has stirred anew the debate on AIDS and health policy: Should the AIDS fight really be entirely in corporate hands? Meanwhile, contaminated blood, an issue six months ago, is now a matter of panic. There's a curious pattern in the AIDS story; its angles are actually bigger the second or third time they appear.

3. HOSTS ON HIGH — 1

Televangelism. Don't believe what the secular humanist press is selling on the Oral Roberts or Jim and Tammy Bakker stories. There's no catastrophe here. Roberts got his money, and what you think about his methods is irrelevant. As for the Bakkers, they operate in a culture where sin is presumed and its admission a virtue. They're already OK. The villain, in this subculture, is whoever tried to exploit their sins.

4. BUSH WHACKED 7 5

1988. All right, what did Bush object to and when did he object to it? And why did Reagan stick it in his gazoo? There's an Eisenhower-Nixon quality to this curious to-do, with Bush, ever-cautious and loyal, continuing to bob to the surface right side up. Bush is actually a beneficiary of the president's now-assumed befuddlement. Reagan didn't hurt Bush because Reagan isn't taken seriously.

5. LION OF THE DESERT * 2

Assad. Assad's occupation of West Beirut and his ruthlessness there have raised nary a murmur in the West. Indeed, Carter's Damascus pilgrimage has gotten Assad happy press as a fellow concerned for the West's hostages. The Hamadi trial may as well never have happened—it burst over Assad just before Iranamok broke, remember?

6. CRUZ MISSILE * 5

Contras. Arturo Cruz's resignation has done in the *contras.* The line on them as losers—and worse—has hardened; such occasional backers as the *New York Times* now feature anti-*contra* coverage. Even the *contras'* recent Senate victory got muted press, perhaps because it occurred after their war for U.S. hearts and minds fizzled.

7. BORN AGAIN * 5

Baby M. A wave of sympathy, especially from feminists, has washed over surrogate mother Whitehead. Though inspired by the Sterns' attack on her character, the new support implies the return of biology as a factor in identity. Because the Baby M case has played into the American penchant for empathy, it is making a far more lasting impression than the already forgotten Vatican pronouncements.

8. DECLINE OF THE SOUTH — 1

Third World. The idea of the Third World is waning. The Ethiopia famine experience, now seen as an exploitation of the West's guilt reflexes, has been chastening. Pascal Bruckner's *Tears of the White Man* argues that the *Tiers Monde* concept is Western self-hatred, ultimately contemptuous of the real "Third World." Economist Nigel Harris announces that the idea is obsolete. Raw materials are moving from North America to newly industrializing nations, turning the original North-South definition on its head.

9. CROWDED NESTS — 1

The family. The rising phenomenon in American families seems to be adult children moving back in with their parents. The reasons include hanging debts from high college tuitions, a dearth of good entry-level jobs, and the continuing resistance to early marriage. Sociologists are scrambling to name the phenomenon. First things first.

10. SINKING OF THE NAUTILUS * 2

Fitness. The decline of obsessive exercise, through soft aerobics, walking, and jarming (a jogging pantomime), is reaching a definitive stage. A preferred exercise now is pumping chocolate. Red meat is coming back, nutrition is giving way to convenience, and jogging outfits are about to look as dated as bell-bottoms.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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cost. The way to encourage conservation without paying this disproportionate cost is to design a tax that brings all its revenue into the Treasury, rather than lavishing three-quarters of it to the oil companies.

A 25-cent-per gallon tax on gasoline would cost consumers about $25 billion a year—just over half what a $10 per barrel import fee would cost. The Energy Department estimates it would reduce oil imports by about 400,000 barrels a day. But all the revenue would go to the Treasury, where it could be used to reduce the deficit or for other worthy purposes. Since most of our European competitors already use even stiffer taxes on petroleum, our economy's ability to compete wouldn't suffer much. Indeed, by helping to reduce the federal deficit, such a tax could boost the long-term performance of the U.S. economy. That alone would make a gas tax a good idea. What's more, by reducing demand for fuel, such a tax would help destroy OPEC's ability—now and in the future—to manipulate world oil prices.

But thanks to its theological opposition to new taxes—as opposed to new tax deductions—the administration refuses even to consider a gas tax. Instead it wrings its hands about the U.S. oil industry, while doing nothing to prevent American consumers from merrily gas-guzzling their way to precisely the future dependency we are now being warned about.

NOTEBOOK

□ FICKLENESS OF ATTENTION is a famous flaw of Washingtonians, but there are times when some of them should be grateful for it. Les Aspin, for example. During The Great Aspin Debate last February, supporters of the temporarily dumped chairman of the House Armed Services Committee insisted that a man of conscience had been punished by liberals for his principled support of the *contras*. Now it turns out that such a view of Aspin's troubles flattered him. When the House voted on *contra* aid in March, Aspin meekly voted against. The danger in Central America hadn't changed. What happened to the man of conscience? Of course, Aspin was in an impossible position, having regained his chairmanship with a promise to oblige. But principles are supposed to do best in impossible positions. The really interesting lesson here does not concern the merits of American policy in Central America, or even the character of a political figure, but the way that politicians and pundits in the capital invent each other, reading things in the image of their own desire. The conservative Democrats were in a bind: Scoop Jackson was dead, but he was needed more than ever. A search for a successor was begun. Les Aspin was chosen, and love-bombed. It may be that the Coalition for a Democratic Majority et al. had Aspin himself convinced that he was a visionary. Now we know that he is merely a very gifted technocrat, who knows one thing (defense) well. The Democrats will have to keep looking for the son of Scoop. Meanwhile the saga of Les Aspin is a cautionary tale.

□ ONE BENEFICIAL SIDE EFFECT of Iranamok is the scuttling of a plan to increase government control and potential censorship of computerized data bases. The plan, drawn up by former national security adviser John Poindexter, was withdrawn by his successor, Frank Carlucci. Anyone who has used these metaphorical mountains of computerized information knows how wonderfully useful they can be. In the journalism business, for example, we are fast becoming addicted to Nexis, a file of every word that appears in major U.S. newspapers, magazines, and other media. The computer allows you to sift and sort to discover truths so thoroughly buried in mounds of data that they might as well have been secret. That's what worries the government. Defense experts fear that information damaging to the national security can be gleaned from the vast quantities of government data available by computer, even though each individual bit of information is unclassified. It's not a trivial risk. However, there's a far greater risk in doing anything that would seriously impede the information revolution. It wasn't so long ago that the computer was viewed ominously as a potential tool of totalitarianism. We now know that, to the contrary, the power of the personal computer is a major force for individual freedom. That is why the Soviets are rightly fearful of allowing the spread of computers in their society. And this, in turn, makes computers and their sundry spin-offs a crucial advantage for the West in the long, twilight struggle—an advantage we would be foolish to compromise out of short-term fears.

□ DANIEL BOORSTIN IS RETIRING as the Librarian of Congress, and the search for the next steward of the nation's single most significant public institution of ideas and culture has begun. The Great Mentioner, his brow higher than usual, has mentioned Gertrude Himmelfarb. We wish to concur heartily. Indeed, it would be hard to think of somebody more qualified by force of mind and scholarly accomplishment. Himmelfarb has distinguished herself in the history of ideas and the history of institutions. Her work on English history from the 18th century to the present is the sort that instructs philosophers and sociologists at once. She is also the kind of historian who should be welcome, indeed is needed, in Washington; her massive study of the idea of poverty in England is a model of history casting light upon policy. The weather around Himmelfarb's work is one of tolerance, curiosity, engagement, rigor. A PAC is in formation.

□ CORRECTION: In last week's Money Culture column, "Chartists" by James K. Glassman, a line of text was lost to modern technology. The text jumping from page 9 to page 10 should have read: "[Technicians] see, for example, the 'head and shoulders' pattern. A stock (or the market as a whole) goes up, makes a peak, then goes down a bit, then back up to a higher peak, then down, then up a bit. Draw this pattern on a piece of paper and you get something that looks like a head and shoulders."

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WHITE HOUSE WATCH

TARGET PRACTICE

JAMES MILLER, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, put the deficit issue in pithy form when he joined President Reagan at a meeting with Republican senators on March 5. He wore a button that said: 108 in '88. Others might waver, but Miller was adamant about sticking to the deficit target of $108 billion for the 1988 federal budget. Reagan was just as firm. As the senators chatted on for more than an hour, the president spoke up twice, first to declare he'll tolerate no tax rate increase, then to proclaim he's unswervingly devoted to reaching the $108 billion target mandated by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill.

Once Reagan had spoken, the business about $108 billion became holy writ at the White House. In a speech to a conservative group March 13, the president adopted a moralistic tone. "Our elected representatives cannot break their promise to the American people," he said. "... We've all got to speak out loud and clear and let Congress know there can be no backsliding on this issue. It's time to rise above politics and self-interest. It's time once and for all to end deficit spending." Howard Baker, the White House chief of staff, one-upped Reagan. Appearing on "This Week with David Brinkley" on March 22, Baker said the administration not only wants the deficit slashed to $108 billion in 1988 but to $72 billion in 1989, as called for in Gramm-Rudman-Hollings. "I don't anticipate that the president's going to change that," said Baker. "I think he is committed."

For now, at any rate. Faced with the lingering Iran arms scandal, the deficit target gives Reagan exactly what he needs, an issue to use against Democrats in Congress. The political calculation at the White House is that although cuts in individual programs aren't popular, the overarching idea of reducing government spending is. "If you wrap it in a larger context of responsible government, our feeling is there's still great sentiment for it," says Gary Bauer, the White House domestic adviser. Besides, Democrats are split on the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings target, and the White House is eager to make them squirm. "The president stands to gain by letting them twist in the wind," an administration official says. The dilemma for Democrats is that many of them don't like either route to a $108 billion deficit—raising taxes or cutting Pentagon and domestic spending.

But the issue isn't trouble-free for Reagan. A lot of Republicans are skittish, too. Their fear is that they will get blame but no credit—blame for seeking to cut popular programs, but no credit for reducing the deficit because they're bound to fall far short of a $108 billion deficit. "We not only can't hit the target, we can't even give the appearance of hitting it," says Republican Representative Bill Gradison of Ohio. That target can't be reached "even with all the gimmicks, even by savaging defense, and even with new taxes." The problem, he says, is a "broken" budget reduction process that should be fixed. "When we passed GRH, we thought the 1986 deficit would be $180 billion. We were wrong. The deficit was $233 billion! I do not think that it undermines anything to admit that we started in good faith, but with a wrong number." The annual reductions of $36 billion should be kept, he says, but with $221 billion (that is, $233 billion minus $12 billion "sequestered" under GRH in March 1986) as the starting point. That would make the 1988 target $149 billion, not $108 billion. Given a projected deficit of $173 billion for 1987, which both the White House and the Congressional Budget Office agree on, the revised target could actually be met.

Gradison has a surprising ally, Education Secretary William Bennett, the conservative movement's favorite Cabinet member. With Reagan so hard-line on the subject, Bennett has understandably shied away from dissenting publicly. But he has privately, and repeatedly, expressed concern at the White House and with conservative leaders. According to his associates, Bennett thinks the GRH targets are an albatross for Reagan and the GOP. By blindly pursuing a $108 billion deficit in 1988, the administration has thrown away two of its best issues: educational reform and the crusade against drugs. Now, when Bennett or other officials talk about these issues, they are hit with questions about deep spending cuts. The Reagan budget, for instance, would cut the Department of Education's appropriation to $15.2 billion from $19.5 billion this year. It also would trim funds for drug education from $200 million to $100 million—a cut ordered by OMB over Bennett's objection—and reduce the money handed out to states for drug enforcement. These cuts are bad politics, Bennett believes, especially since Congress won't go along with them anyway. The result: credit will go to Democrats for restoring education and drug funds.

NEXT YEAR things will get worse. CBO says that even if all of Reagan's budget cuts for 1988 are enacted, the deficit will shrink only to $134 billion. But all the cuts won't be, which means a deficit much higher than $134 billion and the need for still deeper cuts to achieve a deficit of $72 billion for 1989. This leads to Bennett's worst nightmare: an announcement next January by Reagan of a draconian budget for 1989, bristling with painful cuts in programs that Republicans should be touting. GOP presidential candidates would immediately be put on the defensive, and Democrats would be handed issue after issue. Bennett's fears were confirmed by a recent *Washington Post*/ABC News poll, which showed strong support for increased spending for college loans, day care, Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security.

Bennett has been influenced on this by his chief of staff, William Kristol, a former assistant professor at Harvard, and by Kristol's father, neoconservative writer Irving Kristol. The elder Kristol wrote in the *Wall Street*

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Journal on January 26 that the Reagan administration "has quite mindlessly submitted to the tyranny of the budget." Instead of taking "bold action in the area of social policy," it has agreed to "an implicit separation of powers by which the administration takes responsibility for cutting the budget while Congress has the responsibility to spend new money on social programs." The White House thinks "like accountants," while congressional liberals "think politically." For Reagan and conservative Republicans, Kristol concluded, this is "a losing strategy."

Neither Bennett nor Kristol has persuaded budget hard-liners such as Miller, Bauer, or Attorney General Edwin Meese. (Bennett hasn't raised the matter with the president.) Bauer says a deficit of $108 billion is "a realistic target." Miller says there's no incentive for Congress to cut spending without the target. Both Miller and Bauer suggest the economy will pick up steam this year and provide higher revenues than expected, making it easier to reach the targets. "We should get some dividend from growth," says Miller. He concedes, on the other hand, that if Bennett's scenario materializes, "We could end up in a box" in 1988. "But if we come close to the $108 billion, then the $72 billion is eminently do-able."

THE PERSON WHO may have to resolve the budget fight is Baker. Despite Baker's comments on TV, his position isn't clear yet. In that interview, Baker said he was reflecting the president's "instruction to me and his [Reagan's] public statements." White House officials associated with Baker do not tie themselves rigidly to the deficit targets. "All of this is timing," says one. "The timing is not right to break out of the Gramm-Rudman target right now. If you give any indication you're going to let it go, you open the floodgates. . . . You stick by your guns at this point." For one thing, there's no desire to let Democrats off the hook. But once Democrats decide on a budget, the official says, the White House will have to respond. And the response should not be merely tactical, but part of "a 22-month strategy" for the remainder of Reagan's term.

A legitimate worry for Baker is how conservatives, wary of him since his days as Senate Republican leader, would react if he urged Reagan to let the deficit targets slip. Bennett has a way out for him. In talks with conservative leaders, Bennett found willingness to accept shallower spending cuts, so long as the administration agrees to a stronger social policy (education vouchers, AIDS education in a moral context, etc.). "Would the trade-off be worth it?" says Paul Weyrich, the New Right kingpin. "My attitude is, it is. Bennett's concern is a genuine one. I'd rather be out there fighting for vouchers than I would be defending why we cut this or that program." You win more elections that way, he thinks. And that, of course, is everybody's bottom line.

FRED BARNES

Merger mania hits the televangelists.

FALSE PROFITS

ALL IN ALL, it was not a dignified week for TV evangelists. Jim Bakker, host of the PTL ("Praise the Lord") Club's "Jim and Tammy Show," resigned his ministry amid charges of adultery. Just three days later Oral Roberts climbed into his Tulsa "prayer tower" to await the April 1 deadline that Roberts says God has set on his fund-raising efforts. According to Roberts, the Lord told him that if he hasn't pulled in $8 million by then, he will "call [Roberts] home." God, already known to work in strange and mysterious ways, seems to be reserving the strange for TV preachers these days.

It is somehow fitting that the televangelists now face the same worry that many major corporations have had to confront over the past several years: the danger of being swallowed up by the competition. For years, TV preachers have been running their electronic ministries like big businesses. Now the inevitable industrywide shake-out—the mergers, the leveraged buy-outs, and the bankruptcies—has finally arrived.

Jim Bakker's distress turned out to be more than merely financial. Claiming he had been "wickedly manipulated by treacherous former friends" who "conspired to betray me into a sexual encounter," Bakker admitted he'd had an extramarital sexual liaison seven years ago with a church secretary, and that he had paid hush money (reportedly $115,000) to keep the incident secret. Bakker stepped down as chairman of the PTL ministry, handing over its considerable, if highly leveraged, assets to the Rev. Jerry Falwell.

This is hardly a merger made in heaven. Falwell's brand of Christianity is fundamentalist; Bakker's is Pentecostal. The two approaches aren't exactly at odds, but they don't have much in common, either. Falwell's God is incomprehensibly powerful and barely approachable; Bakker's God works on a pray-to-order basis. Bakker once said of his Heritage USA complex: "Why should I apologize because God throws in crystal chandeliers, mahogany floors, and the finest construction in the world?" His wife, Tammy, once publicly prayed for her pet poodle to be raised from the dead. Yet Falwell was the first person Bakker turned to when looking for someone to take over his ministry. The choice had nothing to do with theology. According to Bakker's lawyer, Roy Grutman, Bakker picked Falwell in order to avert a "hostile takeover" of PTL. "This was not simply because of the story of an event seven years ago," Grutman said. "The reason Bakker stepped down was that a rival of his had seized upon that and was hoping to make use of that as an instrument to take over."

Days later, Grutman would hint that the unnamed rival was a prominent head of a national religious organization whose face would be instantly recognizable to millions of

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Americans. The finger soon pointed toward televangelist Jimmy Swaggart, the current industry leader in terms of viewership. Swaggart hotly denied orchestrating a backroom takeover of PTL, and his position drew the support of all but one of his fellow televangelists. From atop his prayer tower, Oral Roberts condemned Swaggart, saying, "Somehow Satan has put something in your heart that you're better than anybody else."

OF ALL the TV preachers, none seemed to revel in his own success more than Jim Bakker. He grew up in humble surroundings. His father was a machine repairman in a piston-ring factory in Michigan. Jim's grades were generally poor, but he was outgoing—by his final year at Muskegon High School, he was class president. In 1959 he enrolled at North Central Bible College, where he decided on a life of Evangelicalism. It was there that he met 18-year-old Tammy Faye LaValley, whom he married in 1961. He was ordained an Assemblies of God minister, and Jim and Tammy spent the next five years crusading throughout the country.

In 1965 they met the Rev. Pat Robertson, who offered them a job with the fledgling CBN. In their first on-air appearance they hosted a Christian puppet show. Jim quickly moved up to become co-host with Robertson of "The 700 Club." In 1974, after a two-year stint with a California-based Christian network, Bakker moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, which would become his permanent base of operations. PTL began as a small regional ministry run out of a modest glass office building in Charlotte, but soon grew dramatically. In fact, PTL grew so fast that several times the operation was certifiably "overextended," in the parlance of the accountants, who began to have a bigger say in the ministry's day-to-day operations. By the time he stepped down from PTL, Bakker's Heritage USA complex covered 2,300 acres, employed nearly 2,000 people, and contained his television headquarters, a luxury hotel, a shopping mall, a home for single mothers, and the third most-visited amusement park in the country.

As a fund-raiser, Bakker made it clear that his personal reputation was on the line, if not his future well-being, a technique only recently discovered by Oral Roberts. The Bakkers weren't afraid to bare their emotions to the viewing public. Tammy cried regularly on the show, and Jim often developed a paperweight-sized lump in his throat when he spoke about his future plans for Heritage USA. They were very ordinary folks with very big dreams, and viewers opened their hearts, and, whenever they could, their wallets. PTL reported $129 million in revenues last year.

The end came swiftly, though. Jim, who would often say to his followers, "The Lord has us on a roller-coaster ride, and we're holding on for dear life," lost his grip on the PTL ministry almost overnight. Earlier this month, Tammy left the show after it was revealed that she had become addicted to prescription drugs. Then came the revelations of Jim's adulterous encounter in 1980, followed by the Falwell "friendly takeover."

For its part, the Falwell organization insists that it is reluctantly playing the part of white knight. "This more than doubles the headaches," Falwell spokesman Mark de Moss told the *Washington Post*. "There's a big investment to protect and now we have the responsibility to protect it. . . . I've hesitated to use the word 'takeover.' I'd rather use the word 'rescue.' "

Still, the new Falwell-Bakker entity has combined revenues estimated at over $250 million, which has certainly got to make the competition sit up and take notice. That includes Oral Roberts, who seemed to be taking a page out of the Jim Bakker book of fund-raising when he revealed God's ultimatum earlier this year. Not to worry, though. A Florida millionaire, Jerry Collins, has already made up the million-plus difference Roberts needs to reach his goal and save his skin. Barring some unforeseen act of God, Roberts will climb down from his 200-foot-tall prayer tower on April Fools' Day and face the TV cameras with a wink and a smile.

The victory, however, may turn out to be a Pyrrhic one for Roberts, just as Jim Bakker's success proved to be. Lately Roberts seems to be assuming that he operates in a moral vacuum—no claim is too preposterous, no pitch too brazen, if it's done in the name of God. But this sort of high-stakes approach carries with it the risk of rapidly diminishing returns. Even Roberts's credulous audience can only fall for it so many times. In the end, the TV evangelists will share the fate of the big-time corporations they've tried to emulate. The strong will survive; the bankrupt will be bought out.

TOM MCNICHOL

Tom McNichol is a Washington writer.

POLLARD I

OFFICIAL ROGUES

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER Yitzhak Shamir still adamantly insists that the recruitment of an American citizen, Jonathan Jay Pollard, as a spy for Israel was a "rogue operation." As he put it on March 11: "The State of Israel has no connection with Pollard or his family. The State of Israel did not hire him and did not assign him espionage missions." This is arrant nonsense.

Jonathan Pollard was a civilian analyst and researcher for the U.S. Navy. In June 1984 he was assigned to the Anti-Terrorist Alert Center (ATAC) of the Naval Investigative Service's Threat Analysis Division. Initially a watch officer, monitoring the general flow of information on terrorism passing through the ATAC, Pollard became a specialist responsible for analyzing classified information

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concerning potential terrorist activities in the Caribbean and the continental United States.

More important, Pollard had both a Top Secret clearance and a clearance for Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI)—data on sophisticated U.S. technical collection systems as well as the fruits of their collection activities. And through his computer, he had access to data banks and "libraries" of highly sensitive Top Secret and SCI material. Anyone with authorized access to those information pools could query them about anything—not just information dealing with one's official duties. Pollard also had clearance to enter and leave his work area without having his briefcase searched. In short, he was optimally situated to be a spy.

Prone to fantasies, Pollard seems to have seen himself as a hero in a Leon Uris novel. After his arrest in November 1985, he told U.S. authorities that as early as 1982 he had decided to become an Israeli intelligence agent. In the spring of 1984, he arranged to meet Col. Aviem Sella—a celebrated Israeli air force officer then on sabbatical at New York University. When Pollard volunteered to use his Navy position to serve Israel, Sella quickly accepted and starting running him—very professionally—as a spy.

SELLA AND POLLARD soon began holding secret meetings—at least one of them in an Israeli diplomat's home in Maryland to which Pollard brought classified U.S. documents. While these were being copied, Sella went over Pollard's performance and gave him new instructions—in which Sella emphasized Israel's interest in Top Secret and SCI documents, and also made clear that Israel did not need or want additional U.S. information on terrorism.

In November 1984, at Sella's direction, Pollard went to Paris, where he and Anne Henderson (then his fiancée, now his wife) spent a week being royally entertained. Sella introduced Pollard to his new case officer—Josef "Yossi" Yagur, a scientific attaché in Israel's New York consulate—and to Rafael Eitan, a renowned senior Israeli intelligence officer who headed Lekem, a scientific and technical intelligence organization in the Ministry of Defense, for which Sella, Yagur, and now Pollard were all working.

The three Israelis gave Pollard additional instructions, again emphasizing that Israel didn't need information on terrorism or counterterrorism, and describing in detail the specific weapons systems and other subjects on which the Israelis did want him to obtain highly classified U.S. documents. During these Paris conversations, Pollard was repeatedly told that he would be "taken care of" if apprehended, with Eitan stressing that any U.S. actions against Pollard could be "contained." Eitan told Pollard he was "one of us."

It was agreed that Pollard would be paid $1,500 a month for his efforts—in effect, doubling his U.S. Navy salary. The Israelis also gave Pollard over $10,000 in cash. This and other money not only covered Pollard's and Henderson's expenses in Paris, but also paid for a jaunt through France, Italy, Austria, and Germany. In addition, Sella gave Anne Henderson a $7,000 diamond and sapphire ring he had seen her admiring in a Paris shop window.

A few weeks later, Yagur and Pollard met, as planned, at the Maryland home of the Israeli diplomat. There Pollard delivered several suitcases of U.S. classified documents to Yagur, took his $1,500, and met another Israeli—identified only as "Uzi"—who, with Yagur, gave Pollard new instructions, establishing a procedure that Pollard followed until his arrest 11 months later.

Every other Friday, Pollard delivered his documents to the Washington, D.C., apartment of an Israeli Embassy secretary, Irit Erb, where they were copied in time for Pollard to pick them up on Sunday and return them to his office on Monday—before anyone could notice they were missing. Once a month Pollard met Yagur at Erb's apartment. During those meetings, Yagur would pay Pollard, review his production and performance, and give him fresh instructions.

This got a bit complicated, since by early 1985 Pollard was delivering thousands of pages of Top Secret, SCI, and other highly classified documents. Yagur's reviews, however, were meticulous, and his "tasking" both detailed and explicit. He described specific information and even specific U.S. documents—about which he seemed well informed—that he wanted Pollard to provide. Yagur also repeated that he did *not* want Pollard to waste time on terrorism or counterterrorism. Yagur was clearly impressed with Pollard, and in early 1985 readily agreed when Pollard asked that his salary be raised to $2,500 per month.

In the summer of 1985, Yagur told Pollard that Eitan wanted to see him again, in Israel. Pollard was about to get married, and the Israelis picked up the expenses for a three-week wedding-honeymoon trip to Israel and Europe, where the Pollards stayed in the best hotels and traveled from Venice to Zurich in a $700 private compartment on the Orient Express.

IN ISRAEL, the mysterious "Uzi" hosted a dinner for Pollard, Yagur, Sella, and their wives; and Pollard, accompanied by Yagur, had several meetings with Eitan, then hospitalized in Tel Aviv. Reassuring Pollard again that Israel would protect him if he were caught, Eitan and Yagur pressed Pollard for even greater quantities of highly classified documents. When Pollard voiced concern about the added risk of detection, Eitan told Yagur to give Pollard an additional $2,000—on top of the more than $10,000 for his trip. He also told Pollard that in addition to his regular monthly salary, the Israelis would establish a foreign bank account for him into which they would pay $30,000 a year for the next ten years.

When Pollard returned to Washington in late August 1985, his production sharply increased. He was impelled to work even harder when, a few weeks later, Yagur showed him an Israeli passport, with Pollard's picture on it, issued in the name of Danny Cohen. Pollard was supposed to use this when he eventually "returned" to Israel.

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Yagur also had Pollard make out signature cards for a foreign bank account in "Danny Cohen's" name, telling Pollard that $30,000 had already been credited to that account, and reminding him that an additional $30,000 would be deposited each year for the rest of the decade. This was a highly professional move. It got Pollard to increase his already substantial, increasingly risky espionage activity, and left him thoroughly hooked, since he could not get access to "Danny Cohen's" bank account without the Israeli passport—which the Israelis controlled.

POLLARD'S intense activity proved to be his undoing. Perhaps sensitized by intelligence-related publicity during 1985—particularly publicity about John Walker and his Navy espionage ring—Pollard's Navy colleagues began to wonder why he kept asking for highly classified documents that had nothing to do with his official responsibilities. Some of these colleagues voiced their concerns to the Naval Investigative Service, which contacted the FBI.

When Pollard was first approached by NIS and FBI agents on November 18, 1985, and even when he was arrested on November 21—driving away from the Israeli Embassy, where he and his wife had unsuccessfully sought asylum—he dissembled to protect his Israeli intelligence colleagues. Sella, Yagur, and Irit Erb—whom Pollard and his wife had alerted—made it back to Israel before the United States became aware of their role in this operation or could do anything to stop them.

In December 1985 U.S. Attorney Joseph DiGenova, State Department legal adviser Abraham Sofaer, and Mark Richard of the Justice Department went to Israel to investigate the Pollard affair. They came away empty-handed. While professing a desire to cooperate, the Israelis were deliberately evasive. They gave the Americans some, but far from all, of the U.S. documents Pollard had passed, and they masked Col. Aviem Sella and his role in the operation.

The Pollard case was not discreet surveillance of the type that all governments keep on even their closest allies. It was the wholesale theft of ultrasensitive, highly classified internal U.S. documents that in their raw, "un-redacted," state the United States could never show to any foreign power without grave damage to its own security. Pollard gave the Israelis approximately 360 cubic feet of such documents. Some outlined U.S. military capabilities, training plans, and projected movements. Others contained sensitive intelligence on a variety of foreign nations and topics, in such detail that a professional analyst could discern what U.S. collection systems must have been used to acquire these data, the capabilities and limitations of those systems, and even, in some cases, the likely identities of human agents. No wonder Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger told the judge who sentenced the Pollards: "It is difficult for me . . . to conceive of a greater harm to national security."

The Pollard operation simply could not have been conceived and conducted by a small handful of overzealous officers acting on their own. Consider the number of Israeli officials, official facilities, and equipment purchased with official funds that became involved, in the United States and in Israel: Rafi Eitan, Colonel Sella, "Yossi" Yagur, Irit Erb, the mysterious "Uzi," the Maryland home of the unnamed Israeli Embassy official, Erb's Washington apartment, the high-speed copying equipment that was required in the United States, the courier facilities that got the Pollard-provided documents back to Israel, the secure storage space that must have been required to house the documents, the staffs necessary to screen and analyze them.

An operation of this magnitude, political sensitivity, and intelligence value could not have been run for well over a year without the knowledge and support of quite a few Israelis—including, at an absolute minimum, officials at the highest levels of the Ministry of Defense. Not counting over $10,000 worth of jewelry obtained for Pollard's wife, by the time of Pollard's arrest in November 1985 the Israelis had paid him around $50,000 in cash for his spying, plus the $30,000 they deposited in "Danny Cohen's" foreign bank account. If this operation had run for the full decade envisaged, Pollard stood to receive an additional $540,000 or so. No intelligence service gets that kind of money out of petty cash. Moreover, most governments rarely supply a passport for a non-citizen, particularly one in a false name. I seriously doubt if any Israeli intelligence service, on its own, could document Jonathan Pollard as Israeli citizen Danny Cohen. That must have required the blessing of senior officials in both the Foreign and the Interior Ministries.

Neither Aviem Sella nor Josef Yagur alone could have given Pollard the kind of detailed direction that he received from both of them. Those tasking instructions must have been prepared by a staff in Israel whose members were aware of Pollard's past production, of everything Israel already knew about the subjects on which Pollard was directed to supply documents, the exact information gaps the Israeli government wanted to fill, and even the specific classified U.S. documents that the Israelis wanted. Such a staff would have had to have been housed somewhere, presumably in the Defense Ministry, and someone quite senior would have had to supervise it.

IN ISRAEL, the sensitivity and sheer volume of Pollard's production must have made the screening and handling of these documents a brisk cottage industry. The Israelis would have had to solve the problem faced by any intelligence service with a prolific, valuable, but ultrasensitive source: how to exploit that source's production to the fullest without compromising it. This takes the right kind of people, a fair number of them, plus high-level support and backing.

It is inconceivable that at least some Pollard-provided intelligence, with special restriction markings, was not provided to Israel's top political leaders, who must have known—at a minimum—that the Israelis had an

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ultrasensitive covert penetration of the U.S. defense establishment. The intelligence provided by Pollard reportedly helped to facilitate Israel's air raid on PLO headquarters in Tunis on October 1, 1985. That raid had to have been approved, in advance, by the prime minister and his inner Cabinet—at least some of whom would have wanted assurances about the solidity of the intelligence on which that raid's planning was based.

SINCE POLLARD'S arrest, none of the Israelis involved has suffered in the slightest. Irit Erb and Josef Yagur returned hastily to Israel, but without any apparent damage to their careers. The Lekem was disbanded, at least in name, and Rafael Eitan retired from government service; but he was of retirement age anyway, and in poor health. Furthermore, he was given one of the most lucrative, prestigious post-retirement positions the government could bestow: the chairmanship of Israel Chemicals, Israel's largest state-run company. As for Sella, the government took pains to shield his very identity, not just Sella himself, from American investigators. Since then, his career has flourished. The day before a U.S. federal grand jury indicted him for espionage, and two days before Pollard was sentenced to life imprisonment, the Israeli government announced that Sella would be the new commander of Tel Nof, Israel's second largest air base.

From an intelligence standpoint, the Pollard operation was professionally brilliant and a great success for everyone involved—except Pollard and his wife. Politically, however, the operation was lunacy. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has asserted that there are no more Pollards. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin has been even more forceful: "Israel does not carry on espionage activities in the United States. There are no Americans or non-Americans who serve as spies for Israel against the United States." Israeli Cabinet officers could hardly be expected to say anything else. In this case, Israel is dangerously undermining its credibility by continuing to insist that the Pollard case was a "rogue operation."

If Israel's leaders truly value their good relations with the United States, they will drop these untenable denials, even at the cost of some political heartburn at home. If any Israeli intelligence service is using Americans as covert assets or agents, Israel should make sure that such operations are terminated immediately, and that their case officers are quietly brought back home. Any Americans involved should be told that their covert ties with Israel are permanently severed. For Israel, no intelligence "success" against the United States can possibly be worth the damage to the U.S.-Israeli relationship that another "rogue operation" would inflict.

GEORGE A. CARVER JR.

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POLLARD II

I SPY, YOU SPY

THERE'S A NEW wrinkle in the story of espionage between the United States and Israel. In recent years, U.S. intelligence has occasionally "planted" agents in Volunteers for Israel, a program in which thousands of private American citizens, mostly Jews, have spent about a month informally serving in the Israel Defense Forces. These volunteers perform menial but essential chores on army bases across the country. Israel gets cheap labor, and the volunteers feel they have made a personal contribution to Israel's security. But according to two well-placed U.S. sources, elements in the American intelligence community (not necessarily the Central Intelligence Agency, I was told) thought that agents posing as "volunteers" could pick up some useful tidbits of information about Israel's military. It is unclear whether they managed to do so.

It now seems that such spying among friends is more common than citizens of the two countries might have thought. Of course, the major revelation in the ongoing saga of U.S.-Israeli spying was the Jonathan Jay Pollard affair—in which an American Jew was convicted of passing massive amounts of classified U.S. intelligence information to Israel. That crisis recently re-erupted with Israel's decision to promote air force Col. Aviem Sella, who was indicted by a U.S. grand jury on charges that he "ran" Pollard.

And the Volunteers for Israel revelation comes only a few days after Republican Senator David Durenberger of Minnesota, the former chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, let slip a few details about a more serious operation. Speaking to American Jewish political activists in Palm Beach, Florida, on March 15, Durenberger said that the CIA had "changed the rules of the game" in 1982 by authorizing an operation to penetrate Israel's military-intelligence community. Durenberger said that this decision apparently led to Israel's decision to run Pollard in Washington.

Six days after Durenberger's remarks, a *Washington Post* report by John Goshko and Bob Woodward confirmed that the United States has spied on Israel. It quoted two sources in Washington as saying that an Israeli military officer "who was unhappy with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon volunteered to provide limited, classified information to the U.S. government." The story says both governments had pledged not to recruit spies in each other's country, but also acknowledge that they can't refuse unsolicited "walk-ins"—such as Pollard himself—who volunteer potentially sensitive information.

According to the *Post* story, the Washington sources said the officer gave the United States "classified material" that was "not dramatic but useful" in a relationship that lasted until 1984. One of the *Post*'s sources said he didn't know why the relationship was terminated. But Durenberger

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suggested the officer had been "bumped" by the Israeli Defense Force, and implied that the soldier was an American Jew who had emigrated to Israel, eventually working his way up through the ranks of the IDF.

At first Israeli leaders did not know how to react to Durenberger's comments. Their initial response was to deny them. Durenberger's allegations, if true, would reduce the negative fallout from the Pollard affair, but to confirm that the operation was a response to a CIA move would blow the Israelis' cover story that Pollard was part of an unauthorized "rogue" unit. Israel's intelligence community, moreover, would understandably be reluctant to acknowledge that it had been penetrated. Also, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has issued an official denial of Durenberger's account.

Pollard, for his part, has said that he refused to provide his Israeli "handlers" with the names of American agents in Israel or with details of the National Security Agency's high-tech intelligence gathering in Israel. Rafael Eitan, the master spy who was in charge of running Pollard, was described as "obsessed" with the need to obtain this kind of information. Eitan, a close political associate of hardline Israeli Cabinet minister Ariel Sharon, also tried to get Pollard to dig up any "dirt" the United States might have on other Israeli politicians. But Pollard has insisted that he refused that request, which enraged Eitan.

WHAT DOES all this espionage among allies signify? One inescapable conclusion is that Israel's famous chutzpah can be a source of weakness as well as strength. It has enabled the country to survive in a very dangerous part of the world. Yet it has also engendered a widely held attitude among Israeli officials that Israel can get away with the most outrageous things—such as putting out a cover story about a "rogue" intelligence unit and then promoting the allegedly renegade operatives. And many of these same cocky Israeli officials also have apparently convinced themselves that their covert skills are such that they can pull off a strategic opening to "moderates" in Iran and the freeing of American hostages in Lebanon.

There is a notion among some senior Israeli officials that many of their American counterparts are not too bright—that they can be "handled," thanks largely to the pro-Israel lobby's clout in Congress. And the political leadership in Israel generally has disdain for the American Jewish community, despite the enormous financial and political support it has given Israel over the years. Israeli officials are convinced that, in the end, the politically active Jewish leadership in the United States would not set itself against Israeli policy. The U.S. government and American Jewish leaders have reinforced this haughty attitude in Israel.

Both American Jews and the U.S. government have benefited from their close association with Israel. Israel has often been a real source of pride for Jews and a strategic asset for the United States. Most agree that in the area of intelligence sharing, the United States has received more than it has provided. But in the Pollard spy scandal—even if the United States did break the rules first—Israel demonstrated a reckless disregard for American Jewry and the American government, as well as for its own long-term interests. In the U.S.-Israeli relationship, Israel, after all, is still the junior partner.

And now officials in both countries are bracing for what may be the next source of tension in the relationship: South Africa. Israel recently announced a ban on new arms deals with the apartheid regime, but some American officials are skeptical that these "sanctions'" will have much practical effect. Israel is clearly trying to pre-empt an administration report to Congress on foreign military sales to South Africa. That report, which is expected to name Israel as a "prime" arms supplier to the regime, will be submitted in April. It is also expected to name several other U.S. allies as weapons suppliers to South Africa, including, says one U.S. official, "half of Europe." But Israel is believed to be the only one of these countries that receives military grants from the United States, and is thus eligible for the aid cutoff suggested in last year's South Africa sanctions law.

Such a cutoff isn't likely. What worries the Israelis is that the classified version of the report (as opposed to the less detailed summary that will be made public) will be rough on their government, and will contain many specific details of Israel's military relationship with South Africa. They fret that the document might be leaked to the media, further damaging Israel's image in America, which is exactly what Israel doesn't need in the aftermath of the Pollard spy scandal and the Iran arms affair.

Serious as they are, these strains will probably be short-lived, especially as the 1988 U.S. election campaigns heat up. Don't expect Congress to cut the $3 billion aid package for Israel. On the other hand, Israel may not win the favorable long-term debt restructuring schedule it has been quietly lobbying for. This is not the best Washington climate for handing out more favors to Israel.

WOLF BLITZER

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Magnet schools' unfulfilled potential.

MAGNETIC ATTRACTION

THE MAGNET school, like deficit reduction, is a concept that has a warm, comfortable home in the heart of every person involved in the making of respectable opinion. The main difference between the two is that magnet schools have made the big leap from dream to reality. Nationally they number well over a thousand, and their ranks are sure to increase. They constitute the most important development of the last decade in urban public educa-

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tion. They have multiplied so quickly because their advantages are so bountiful: magnet schools (defined as schools whose student bodies are determined by interest in a special subject, not by neighborhood of residence) are unusually responsive to students' special needs, stimulating for teachers, and racially integrated.

The roots of the magnet school lie in the 1960s renaissance in progressive education. Although each child is an individual with his own needs and special talents, the argument went, all children in public schools were being taught in the same way, mostly for the convenience of teachers and administrators. The father of magnet schools is Mario Fantini. In the 1960s Fantini was giving money to experimental programs as an official of the Ford Foundation. Now he is dean of the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts. Fantini became convinced that students with unusual talents would blossom if there were new public schools for them that emphasized the subjects they were good at.

WHAT KEPT magnet schools from ending up with a lot of other attractive ideas in the graveyard of educational vogues was that they acquired powerful allies: federal judges. As the great migration of blacks to the cities drew to a close, it became clear that the overwhelming problem of urban public schools over the next generation was going to be racial integration. Magnet schools offered a way to integrate school systems without busing. The glamour of a high school of the performing arts or the health professions would keep white students from defecting to private, parochial, or suburban schools; meanwhile, through the use of racial quotas, the magnet schools could be racially balanced.

As the NAACP Legal Defense Fund sued school district after school district around the country, judges, no doubt aware that their colleague Arthur Garrity in Boston had consigned himself to the life of a pariah and his city to a nightmarish experience with busing, began to settle on magnet schools as the way to desegregate school districts. Congress passed laws in 1976 and again in 1983 making federal money available to school districts that established magnet schools. The result, in most cities, is that magnet schools are a success as far as they go. They are integrated without incident, and oversubscribed. By order of the judge, in most cases, the students are picked by lottery, within strict racial quotas. In places with a first-come-first-serve system, such as Pittsburgh and Prince George's County, Maryland, parents line up days in advance to get their kids into the best magnet schools.

No city has the all-magnet school system that is the beau ideal of magnet school advocates; the non-magnet schools usually are of lower quality and have fewer white students than the magnet schools. In that sense magnet schools have neatly substituted class for race or neighborhood as the governing principle of a segregated school system. The division between magnet schools and neighborhood schools in many cities pretty well matches the much-noted breaking up of black America into a middle class and an underclass.

There are all sorts of public policy issues inherent in magnet schools. Is it fair for school districts to operate two classes of schools, one plainly better than the other? Should admission be by lottery or by some kind of meritocratic test? Are racial quotas a good idea? Because the schools are operating under court orders, these questions are moot in most places. But there is one big city where they have been fought out in public: New York, which is so big that the Legal Defense Fund has never sued it for fear of ending up in a quagmire.

Two political realities have affected the politics of merit schools in New York. First, as is not true in most cities, the leadership class generally sends its children to private schools. This makes public education a faraway and hazy issue in which the establishment is likely to prefer something that sounds good to something that works. Second, for two decades the basic fissure in New York politics has been between white Manhattan liberals and minorities on the one hand, and working-class white ethnics in the outer boroughs on the other. In fact, it was the public school issue that brought this into sharp relief in the 1960s. Then, the first group seemed to have control; now the second group is in its heyday, even though demographic trends are running against it. John Lindsay, the golden standard-bearer of Manhattan liberalism, is practicing law, and all four of the most powerful politicians in New York—Governor Mario Cuomo, Mayor Edward Koch, and Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Alfonse D'Amato—are white ethnics who in very different ways have taken pains to appeal to the "forgotten middle class."

There were always a few magnet schools in New York: Fiorello H. LaGuardia (formerly Music and Art, of *Fame* fame), and the egghead schools such as Bronx Science, Stuyvesant, and Hunter College High. These are still going strong, and they're run as unapologetic meritocracies. LaGuardia admits by audition, and the egghead schools by written test (with small affirmative-action programs). The theoretical reason for this, which is perfectly sound, is that the benefits they confer would be lost on the unqualified. Giving advance science training to someone who can't understand it helps neither the youngster nor America. The real reason is that the egghead schools' admissions offices all have special legislative protection, thanks to lobbying efforts by their alumni in Albany during the 1970s.

DURING THE initial magnet school boom of the '70s, New York set up six "educational option" schools (now there are eight) that teach skills, mostly secretarial, that in theory practically everybody should be able to master. From the beginning, liberal reformers were concerned that the ed-ops would become pockets of elitism. As a result the schools opened with quotas based on reading ability: 25 percent of the student body reading above grade level, 50 percent at grade level, and 25 percent below. But they became somewhat elite anyway.

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The principals take the best students from within each of the three reading-level groups, and also consider grades and attendance records. Most of their students graduate (unheard of in most New York high schools) and then go on not to secretarial jobs but to college. Somewhere in the subconscious of the establishment is lodged the idea that if these schools are elitist, they must also be racially discriminatory, but the truth is that they're mostly black and Hispanic. "We're the elite schools for a large part of the minority population of New York. We're their Bronx Science," the principal of one ed-op said.

Over the years the reformers chipped away at this backdoor elitism. It used to be that students had to fill out a special application. Under this system the most popular school, Murry Bergtraum High School for Business Careers (irony buffs will be pleased to know that the other business-career ed-ops are named after Norman Thomas and Paul Robeson), got about 8,000 applications a year for 800 places. In 1982 the Board of Education instituted a new high school application form, in which applying to an ed-op required simply checking a box on a form you had to fill out anyway. Applications jumped—at Bergtraum, to more than 30,000 a year for the same number of places. In 1985 the Board of Education changed its standardized reading test, pushing more students into the top level. This too had the effect of forcing the ed-op principals to take a less elite student body.

Also in 1985 two private educational-reform groups, the Educational Priorities Panel and Advocates for Children, published scathing reports on New York City high school admissions, convincingly pointing out that the process is confusing for students, because there are so many different magnet programs (261 in all, the vast majority within neighborhood schools) being run by their principals' own rules. A subsequent consultants' study for the chancellor of the Board of Education confirmed the reports' conclusion, and the head of that study was appointed the head of the school system's high schools division. The Board of Ed administration and the liberal establishment (notably the *New York Times* editorial page) were now geared up to "reform" the ed-op schools.

The agenda of the reformers was threefold: One, make it clear what the admissions criteria for the ed-op schools are. Two, make their admissions more random and take selection out of the hands of the principals. Three, abolish the racial quotas under which 28 New York high schools (only two of them ed-ops) are kept half white. Point one is unarguable, and was adopted. Point three ran up against the full power of the Queens and Brooklyn white political and real estate interests, and was quietly dropped.

BUT THE ed-ops were vulnerable. Their constituency is mostly middle-class blacks scattered all over the city. Also, the Board of Ed dislikes most of the ed-op principals—they operate their schools as fiefdoms (albeit successful ones), and the neighborhood-school principals complain about them constantly for taking away the best students and dumping the worst ones. The bad feeling has been especially intense since 1985 when, as part of the improve-the-schools movement, the New York State Regents began publishing lists of schools whose dropout rates, test scores, and attendance rates were in the bottom ten percent statewide. Seventy-two of the 118 neighborhood high schools in New York made the first list, and none of the ed-op schools. The neighborhood principals cited were furious. Also, the Board of Ed is under a court order governing its treatment of Limited English Proficient and Special Education students, and feels that the ed-ops aren't shouldering their burden of these. Because of some mixture of these bureaucratic discontents and a vague spirit of egalitarianism, the Board of Ed changed the ed-ops' admissions policies for next fall's entering class. The old 25-50-25 reading-level quota system is out, and a new quota of 16-68-16 is in. The principals henceforth can pick only half of the entering class; the Board of Ed computer will pick the other half.

These changes, which may sound Swiftian to you, were hailed by reformers and by the *New York Times*. Although (or maybe because) they were so hard to understand, they carried the aura of a blow struck against elitism in general (which they may be) and racism in particular (which they aren't at all). There is a minor way in which they are supposed to improve education: good students, denied admission to the ed-ops under the new rules, might stay in their neighborhood schools and help make these schools better. On the other hand, they might go to parochial school. The real point of the changes was to distribute more randomly the wonderful, dramatic opportunity that admission to an ed-op represents, on the assumption that random is the only way that's fair.

THE INTENSITY of feeling about ed-op admissions is, of course, a sign of what a rare thing it is for a New York high school student to be in a situation where it's actually likely that he or she will graduate and go on to, say, Pace University. Who shall get this rare gift? The judge-reformer-editorialist class is so certain random admissions are the right answer that they have endorsed a system that excludes evidence not just of innate intelligence but of personal effort and achievement as well. For example, the Board of Ed's ed-op admissions computer is not allowed to consider a student's attendance record or grades. It's true that kids with mediocre records could benefit from a business-career magnet school. But it seems perfectly fair, if you have to be selective, to reward the kids who've put in the most effort so far. If every junior high school student knew that magnet school admission was not a random matter, then it might spur a great many of them to work harder.

As magnets have gotten established around the country, they have departed from the dream of teaching tailored to the individual student, and have become a smorgasbord of vocational-technical education. It's ironic that while national opinion has been moving steadily toward

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the view that all students should be taught the basic three R's and then the higher liberal arts, urban high school systems are moving in the opposite direction. Right now kindergarteners in Los Angeles are signing up for the Westminster Avenue Elementary School, "expressly aimed [says the school system's brochure] at the student interested in math and science and in business computer technology." Magnet schools in big districts, because they have to present so many different choices, have moved beyond the basic set of pre-career options and become like museums of educational trends—they're right-wing and left-wing at the same time. In many districts the most popular school at the moment is the "traditional academy," where students wear uniforms and call the teachers "sir" and "ma'am."

It would be wonderful if the plain old unspecialized city high school could be made to work again. But if the sad truth is that only magnet schools are a proven way out of the inner cities, then let's have more magnet schools, which means turning all the really bad inner-city neighborhood schools into magnets. The reformers agree with this—everybody is for the all-choice urban school system. That it hasn't happened anywhere yet is a sign that there's nobody pressing for it. The part-magnet, part-neighborhood system, hybrid that it is, keeps a lot of constituencies happy: judges (though not, to its credit, the Legal Defense Fund), neighborhood-school principals, and urban whites. What all-magnet systems have going for them is that they hold out the possibility of making universal public education, supposedly one of the keystones of American life, a reality in cities. It certainly isn't now.

NICHOLAS LEMANN

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Memories of a boom gone bust.

MY LIFE AS A TEXAN

BY JOSEPH NOCERA

Northampton, Massachusetts

I became a Texan on a hot March day in 1982, when my wife and I limped into Dallas in our $900 Honda, on our way to a new life in Austin. It is the heat I remember most. It was *March*, for crying out loud; back East three days before, there had been snow in the forecast. Also, my car lacked air conditioning, a serious oversight, I suddenly realized. All around me, I saw astonishingly well-preserved people (even French women do not wear as much makeup as Dallas women do) driving astonishingly large cars with their windows rolled up. I could see their hair blowing in the cold air blasting from the vents. This, I soon realized, was not just another way for the energy haves to sneer at the energy have-nots. (Texans had bumper stickers to handle that.) It was a reminder that, almost as much as OPEC, air conditioning had made Texas possible. That's why Houston is like a futuristic space city—a place where, thanks to an elaborate underground tunnel system, you almost never have to face the muggy, suffocating air outside. That's the kind of air that slows you down, and in Texas in 1982, nobody had time to slow down.

My wife and I were giddy with anticipation as we drove into town. And why not? The price of oil had recently reached $40 a barrel. The Hughes Rotary Rig count, which calculates the number of wells being drilled at any given moment, was a shade under 4000. That figure was down somewhat from the all-time high of 4531, reached the previous December, but still very high indeed. It was widely agreed that the drop was temporary: just a little seasonal adjustment, y'all. The price of oil could go no place but up—to $60, say, or $70, or (hell, let's go for it) even $100 a barrel. This was the gospel of the day, and the whole damn state believed it.

My wife and I had never even heard of a rig count. But it didn't matter. As much as any unemployed auto worker looking for a job on an oil rig, we were ready to believe in the idea of Texas. In leaving the East where we had lived all our lives, we were voting with our feet. Wasn't the Frostbelt dead? Wasn't it a place full of sadness and defeat? When we saw our first "Let Them Freeze" bumper sticker, we laughed. We were ready to become Texans.

As things turned out, it was an inauspicious moment to become a Texan. Six months later, the price of oil was in the mid-$30s, the rig count was in free fall, and unemployed auto workers were becoming unemployed oil roughnecks and trickling back to Michigan. Although Texas still had a long way to go before it hit bottom, the party was fundamentally over by the winter of 1982. Foolishly, many natives took a certain smug satisfaction in the state of things right around that time. Why, they would say, breaking into that obnoxious Sun Belt grin, this little downturn was going to do Texas a world of good. Yes

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sirree, it was. For instance, it would get rid of the Yankees (heh, heh, heh). It would clear away the riffraff. "The dentists are back drilling teeth," was the line you heard a lot in Petroleum Clubs around Texas. Besides, a little belt-tightening was good for the soul. Texans remained upbeat, though there was a glancing-over-the-shoulder quality to it. It was a jittery kind of swagger.

And then it was a few years later, and the price of oil was still dropping, and the value of real estate was plummeting, and every straw Texas grasped at was still being snatched away cruelly. Oh, how the OPEC oil ministers could tease Texas with their meetings and pronouncements and high foolishness! Texans had stopped talking about how hard times were good for the soul. More profoundly, Texans stopped thinking of themselves the way they had during the boom. They were no longer America's chosen people. I was in the office of a certain Famous Texas Oilman right around the time oil hit $10 a barrel. He and his staff were discussing whether he should appear on the Phil Donahue show to talk about the Texas economy. "I'm just getting damn tired of airing our dirty laundry," he said finally, and instructed his aides to turn down Donahue. Whoever thought the day would come when a Texas businessman wouldn't want to brag about Texas?

I lived in Texas for four-and-a-half years, long enough to watch one of the great booms in American history turn into one of the great busts. I suspect this is what California must have been like during the great gold rush, or Wall Street in those euphoric, lunatic weeks before the crash. The boom made Texans feel invulnerable, immortal, utterly superior to other Americans. The bust has made them feel ashamed. The collapse of the oil economy is viewed not as the East would view such a calamity—as something beyond anyone's control. It is seen instead as a personal failure—a failure of character.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ago a *New Yorker* staff writer named John Bainbridge wrote a book about Texas called *The Super-Americans* that began: "It is currently fashionable among the more advanced spirits in this country to look upon Texas with an air of amused condescension." Second sentence: "This attitude . . . is historically appropriate, for Texas is a new boy, standing in relation to the rest of the United States as the United States stands to Europe." With his arch prose and anthropological tone, Bainbridge himself turned out to be one condescending SOB, which is why his book was reviled in Texas.

To hear Bainbridge tell it, Texans were always doing the darndest things. Hugh Roy Cullen, the legendary oil wildcatter ("legendary" is to "wildcatter" what "war-torn" is to "Lebanon"), gave $20,000 a year to the Houston Symphony, in return for which the symphony played his favorite song, "Old Black Joe," whenever he was in attendance. Another oilman gave gorillas to the zoo on the condition that they be named Franklin and Eleanor. *The Super-Americans* is filled with oilmen making million-dollar sports bets, oilmen buying pink Cadillacs, oilmen's wives going on mind-boggling shopping sprees at Neiman-Marcus, and the oilman's favorite newspaper, the *Dallas Morning News*, coming out in favor of traffic deaths (such killings, said the paper, resulted from "the same human qualities that made America great—willingness to risk, driving energy, rugged individualism"). Never mind that when *Texas Monthly* (my Texas employer) tried to verify these stories many years later, a fair number of them turned out to be (ahem) more apocryphal than not. What Bainbridge captured perfectly was Texas's desire to thumb its nose at the East, combined with a deep inferiority complex about the East. He also captured the Texas attitude toward capitalism, a raw and naked thing in which the point was to make as much money in as short a time as possible, and then to spend it in the most ostentatious manner imaginable. The old-money snobs in the East could not abide this, but it was the essence of what Bainbridge labeled Super-Americanism.

MANY OF Texas's rough edges were gone by the time I got there. A businessman was more likely to wear Brooks Brothers than Stetson. Houston had more classy, postmodern skyscrapers per square inch than anyplace else in America, New York included. Austin, where I lived, was clotted with trendy restaurants. Some of the insecurity was gone, too, except in the sissy professions, like the arts. Unto the end of time, Texas writers will tear their hair out at the mere mention of New York.

What Texans loved most about the oil boom was that it represented a vindication of the Super-American ethos. It was, above all else, a *cultural* triumph—the long-awaited proof that the Texas values were superior to those of the cursed Yankees. For my first year or so in Texas, the Texas tycoons I interviewed would ask, "Where you from, son?" And when I said Rhode Island, the invariable response was: "Why, we've got ranches here bigger than Rhode Island." (Actually, there's only one ranch left in Texas that is bigger than Little Rhody, but who's counting?) I finally learned to answer, "the East," which is what my questioner wanted to hear. He would shake his head slowly, affect an expression approximating regret, and say something like, "Pretty tough up there, huh?" Yes, I would agree, things were pretty tough up there. This produced more head-shaking, and then a short, more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger lecture about how the East was suffering for the sins of its past—for its tolerance of unions and its guv'ment regulations and its parochialism and its lack of entrepreneurs—and how those folks up North could learn a few things now from Texas.

Revenge was the agenda. It was sweet to see the Midland Hilton filled with young bankers in yellow ties, fellows from places such as Continental Illinois and Citibank, begging—*begging*—oilmen to take their money. It was fun to let those young bankers squirm a little before agreeing to a loan. (In the end, though, they always agreed: a fatal mistake.) It was joyous to read in that idiotic best seller, *Megatrends*: "For economic growth, give me Texas, California, and Florida and you can have the other 47." They weren't patronizing Texas anymore. Twenty-five years after Bainbridge, another writer arrived. At the personal request of

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the governor, James Michener moved to Austin to write a novel called *Texas*. Michener was a local celebrity in my Austin years: a captured Yankee. He was there to do Texas's bidding, rather than the other way around. One could be sure he would treat Texas with all due reverence. More proof that Texas had won.

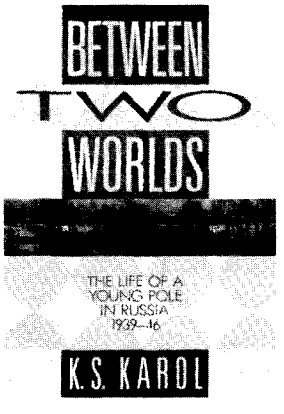
Of course the oil boom was also about money. Why was money so important? If you had to ask, then you weren't a real Texan. Not being a real Texan, I asked. The first time, that same Famous Texas Oilman told me: "Money is just a way of keeping score." The second time, I heard the same thing. I wish I had a nickel for every time I heard that line. At *Texas Monthly*, our favorite symbol of the frenzied quality of the oil boom was a sign in Houston: "Business cards made in four hours."

In spring 1983, early in Texas's stiff-upper-lip phase, I went to Midland to write about a company that had risen spectacularly in the boom and then crashed in equally spectacular fashion almost before the bust had arrived. By then, the Midland Hilton was filled with another species of Yankee, the New York investment banker who specialized in loan restructuring. The oilmen and bankers I talked to, all of whom had been knee-deep in the boom, had a surprisingly hard time describing what it had been like. The whole thing had already taken on an air of unreality for them. The essential nuttiness of the boom—bankers passing out millions of dollars in loans to kids who never drilled a well in their lives; companies buying $50 million offshore rigs they had absolutely no use for; 20,000-foot wells being drilled that hadn't the remotest chance of hitting oil or gas—was so removed from any kind of normal economic rationale that it *did* seem unreal.

But money was made, and it was also spent. No, Texans weren't buying pink Cadillacs. Those days were gone, or almost gone. I did meet one young man in a tiny Texas town who used his new wealth to buy (along with a gaudy array of rings and necklaces) a Bentley, after which he hired two black men, one as his chauffeur, and one as his bodyguard. This was considered an act of such appalling taste that even his neighbors were hoping he'd go broke. Still, there were other ways to flaunt wealth without being quite so crass. Texans bought helicopters, for instance, which quickly became the corporate status symbol of the boom. Executives of newly formed oil companies purchased a helicopter or two on the corporate dime (at $250,000 a pop), while helicopter entrepreneurs cropped up in Houston to cater to the growing demand, flying businessmen across town for, say, lunch. That's the sort of thing you did in a boom—you flew to lunch. One flamboyant oilman supposedly consummated his new marriage in his new helicopter, which was hovering over the oil field where he had made his fortune. Well, why not?

Texas was the first place I ever lived where people used the words "free enterprise" without smirking. In Rhode Island, when I was growing up, security was the preeminent value. The best jobs were thought to be the gov-

"Makes Pasternak's *Zhivago* seem like an understatement."*



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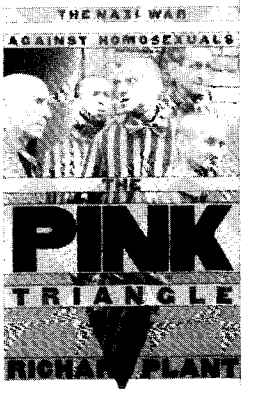

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ernment jobs, because it was impossible to get fired. Unions were held in higher regard there than anyplace else in the country. Corporations, in general, were thought to be up to no good. And as for money, in New England money was a private and discreet thing, certainly not something to be flaunted. Before I landed in Texas I never met anybody who openly and proudly admitted that his goal in life was to get rich.

FOR ME, Texas values had an enormous seductive appeal. They were honest. And, during the boom at least, they certainly seemed to work. Returning to Providence in the 1970s and early 1980s I was struck over and over again at the deadness of the place. Every visit, yet another old mill or factory had closed down. The windows were always smashed, the doors were boarded up, and a sign read: "500,000 sq. ft. to let. Will remodel to suit." In Texas, meanwhile, I stumbled across a ritual I called breakfast macho. I'd call up a young developer or oilman and ask for an appointment. "Well," he'd say, "I'd love to visit with you but my schedule is filled." Pause. "How about breakfast?" Fine, I would say, what time? "Oh, not too early. Does 6:30 sound all right?" And when I got to the hotel coffee shop at 6:30 the place was already packed with businessmen. It was a form of business ostentation: everyone was trying to show everyone else that they were off and running at the crack of dawn. Still, I could not imagine anyone in Rhode Island doing business that early in the morning. Maybe the East really was getting what it deserved. The East didn't care enough about making money. It wasn't willing to "get out there and compete," a favorite expression of young Texas businessmen. It wasn't willing to act more like Texas.

The rather large hole in this line of reasoning should have been obvious, even to me. Texas's prosperity was the result not so much of its vitality or its values as of $40-a-barrel oil. On the rare occasions when someone pointed this out in Texas, the response was automatic. Forty-dollar oil, Texans said, reflected the workings of good ol' reliable supply and demand. It was the price oil rose to "naturally" after those onerous guv'ment regulations were removed. Even the *price* of oil represented a triumph of values. The notion that the market for oil was not really free—that it was being set by a cartel that distorted the market terribly—was something Texans couldn't bring themselves to think about. To admit such a thing would mean admitting that Texas was now as much at the mercy of OPEC oil ministers as it once had been of the hated Yankees.

There was also a second self-delusion. To an astonishing degree, Texas simply denied that its economy was based on oil. Nowhere was this more ludicrously on display than in America's oil capital, Houston, which never made the slightest attempt to hustle new business for itself. Houston believed that it had such a "healthy bid'ness climate" that companies would move there without having to be asked. Even after the bust had begun creeping up on them, Houstonians insisted that they would be OK because the economy was *already* diversified. Why, look at all the new law firms (representing oil companies), and the new computer concerns (selling to oil companies), and the new service industries (catering to oil companies). The largest employer in Houston, it was often pointed out, was not an oil company, but the Texas Medical Center. Once, in a meeting with Houston's mayor, a smart technocrat named Kathy Whitmire, a number of us at *Texas Monthly* pushed her on the subject. Didn't Houston need to find some new employers who weren't so dependent on the price of crude? She adamantly refused to concede the point.

Yet I was denying it myself. We didn't have giant oil companies in Austin. We did, however, have the University of Texas, which was busy buying Nobel Prize winners from Harvard—more captured Yankees—with its oil money. And we had the state government, which depended on oil-generated tax revenues. But never mind all that. It was so much more fun to concentrate on Austin's downtown real estate boom, and its housing boom, and best of all, its high technology boom. Look out Silicon Valley! Once Texas's let's-get-rich ethic was harnessed on behalf of high technology, there would be no stopping us. Austin, which already had large IBM and Texas Instruments facilities, was going to be the center of "Silicon Prairie."

Austin's crowning moment came in May 1983, at a time when other parts of the state were already beginning to suffer. That month, a new entity named Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corporation (MCC) chose to locate in Austin over 57 competing cities. This was a very big deal, for it made Austin feel like the last safe city in Texas—the one place the oil bust would miss. MCC was not a large company; it was a research consortium to produce the next generation of computer technology. But because of its "cutting-edge" nature, it would attract other companies. Its head, former National Security Agency director Bobby Ray Inman, became an even grander celebrity than Michener.

Long before MCC could transform American computer technology, it transformed Austin housing prices. They had been climbing rather nicely for some time; that summer they took off. As always happens, they became a subject of obsessive, joyous concern to people who owned their own homes, a club I had recently joined. Soon after the MCC announcement, some friends down the street got a price for their house that was so high the bank wouldn't complete the loan. The selling price was too far above the appraised value. Well, well, well, I thought happily.

HERE'S SOMETHING I learned about a bust: you're never willing to admit it has arrived until it affects your own life. For four years, I wrote stories either directly or indirectly about the boom-to-bust cycle. I had as clear a sense of what was going on as anyone in Texas. And still, it wasn't until I decided to leave the state, in the spring of 1986, that I was finally forced to face the truth: even Austin was not immune from the effects of falling oil prices. By 1986 there were no safe cities in Texas. Maybe I should have noticed that the five—five!—high rises going up in

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downtown Austin were not being leased very quickly. (I'm told that these buildings are now known as the "see-throughs" because so few floors have been rented.) Or maybe I should have started noticing the "Now Serving Breakfast" signs that were hanging from all those trendy Austin restaurants. The signs almost always meant that the restaurants had only another month or two left. I did notice Bobby Ray Inman's resignation as the head of MCC just before I left. He used the old I've-accomplished-what-I-came-here-to-do dodge, though nobody believed him. By then, though I already knew the score. I knew because I was trying to sell my house.

THE FIRST realtor my wife and I met seemed awfully cautious, and he proposed a selling price we considered too low. We went with someone else who was more upbeat, more Texan—the way we wanted to be. We got an early offer, and it was even lower than the cautious realtor's estimate. We felt insulted. We turned it down. And then we waited. First we waited for someone to make a higher offer. Then we lowered the price and waited for an offer, period. We lowered our price twice more, until it matched the offer we had turned down. Still, nothing. (What we would have given for that buyer to show up again!) By the early fall, when we were close to leaving, we waited simply for people to show up to look at the house. Very few did. There just weren't any buyers in Austin anymore.

Why was this happening? And to me, instead of some oilman in Midland! I looked around me. The Austin unemployment rate was only six percent, hardly the sort of figure you'd expect in a bust. The "land-flippers"—people who bought property hoping to sell it immediately for a big profit—were suffering, but most other people still had jobs and money. There didn't seem to be any logical reason for the housing market to dry up. But there was a reason: the price of oil had dropped below $10 a barrel, and that was a figure so frightening that no Texan could be unaffected. The boom psychology had been replaced by an every bit as powerful bust psychology. Logic had little to do with it. Like the rest of Texas, Austin was simply paralyzed.

So on my way out, I became a real Texan: I began praying for $30 oil. It seemed my only hope. Every time OPEC met—and Lord knows, they met often in 1986—I scoured the news reports, hoping against hope that this might be the time they figured out some way to prop up the price of oil. It felt pretty pathetic, but everyone in Texas was doing likewise. There was no more pretense, no more bluster, none of the "bravado, zest, and ebullience" that Bainbridge had once noted. The Super-American Century was over. Only the Saudis could save Texas, and Texas knew it, and it was a painful and humiliating fact to know.

I can't prove this, but I think that the bust may end up affecting Texas the way the Depression affected America. In late 1984 a young banker was quoted as saying, "Until a new generation of bankers comes along, I doubt we'll see another boom. [Today's] bankers aren't going to fuel it." My feeling is that until we see another generation of *Texans* there won't be another boom. Texans have been permanently scarred. You don't hear Texans talking about taking risks and making money much anymore, except maybe for Ross Perot, the last Super-American left in Texas. I think it's sad that Texas has lost its swagger. That may have been its curse but it was also its charm.

NOW I LIVE in booming New England. Do you know something? It reminds me in some ways of the Texas I used to know. People who think about such things will tell you that New England has risen from the dead because it was able to transform itself from a manufacturing economy to a service economy. Those old mills are now filled with hot little ad agencies. But I notice something else: when people in New England talk about free enterprise, they don't smirk anymore. At least some of the new prosperity around here has to do with the fact that old money barriers have broken down, and old values have changed. It's not the Brahmins who are starting those hot little ad agencies. There is new money in New England now, and some new-money sensibility. Maybe, when I wasn't looking, New England was learning from Texas after all.

Sometimes, though, I think that New England is acting a little too much the way Texas once did. When I go to Boston today, I see Houston all over again. No, the skies aren't filled with helicopters. But there is the same feeling of frenzy that characterized Houston during the oil boom. The point is not just to get rich, but to get rich *right this second*. And when I hear the smug talk in New England about how it can't happen here, I shudder. New England, so the argument goes, is not dependent on any one thing the way Texas was. It has technology and services and, of course (and this last is said in an especially self-satisfied fashion), it has the universities—the implication being that New England has brainpower that Texas never had. Well, maybe. On the other hand, a good deal of that brainpower is busy trying to figure out how to knock Soviet nuclear warheads out of the sky. Take away Star Wars—something a Democratic president would probably do—and you wonder how long the New England boom will last. Or at least I wonder.

In Northampton, the pretty town in the middle of Massachusetts where I now live, most cocktail hour talk eventually gets around to the price of housing, just as it once did in Austin. Prices here have increased two- and threefold in the past few years, which gives the talk that familiar joyous and obsessive quality. It's always fun to figure out how much money you've made, even if it's only on paper. A few months ago, I was showing my house here to one of my Northampton friends. When we went up to the attic, which is large and unfinished, he immediately began to envision the possibilities: a study here; a large closet there; maybe even a small bedroom. "For every dollar you put into it," he said with conviction, "you're going to get three dollars back." My wife rolled her eyes to the heavens. I shook my head and laughed. I guess we're still Texans at heart. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Japery, Jeopardy, Japan

When I was a child, I loved everything about the circus but the clowns. I didn't think they were funny. I still don't think they're funny.

Raising Arizona is a clown film. It comes on with an outsize painted funny face all over its plot and technique and performances, insisting from the start that it's hilarious because its face says it is. The result, from the start, is stupefyingly boring.

Raising Arizona
(20th Century-Fox)

Lethal Weapon
(Warner Bros.)

I Lived, But . . . .
(Shochiku)

The Only Son
(Films, Inc.)

Joel and Ethan Coen are the young brothers who, two years ago, made their first film, *Blood Simple*. (They collaborate on screenplays, then Ethan produces and Joel directs.) *Blood Simple* was a purported film noir, clumsily plotted, laden with pseudo-smart camera tricks. In my review I wondered what sort of murder film they would murder next. I wondered wrong: now they have murdered farce.

Any picture that stars Nicolas Cage is off to a shaky start, and when Cage is supposed to be winsome, the shakes become tremors. Cage is a small-time bandit in Tempe, Arizona, who bungles his burglaries, is jailed often, and falls in love with the female police officer who serves his mug shots. In time—after he does his time—they marry, find themselves unable to have children, and kidnap one of the quints born to rich parents on the ground that the richies can spare one. In itself this is not an impossible nub for a farce; it's the Coens who make it impossible.

The picture is, quite deliberately, overdone: the sets are all garish cartoons of the places they are supposed to be, the performances are all caricatures. It's not the overdoing that's wrong, it's the overweening pride in the farcical skill that isn't there. Every potentially amusing sequence, like the visit of friends who coo over the baby, like the ex-cons who barge in to stay, like Cage's fumbled attempt to steal a package of Huggies from a supermarket—on and on—is stomped into the ground by the weight of the filmmakers' self-satisfaction.

The floor-level shots and the ceiling shots that pocked *Blood Simple* are back again, together with some shots that are coyly supposed to be posed and therefore funny but that never make it to the second adjective. About the script, only this further word: a menacing motorcyclist is wanted in the film, so Cage dreams of him, and then he appears. A happy ending is needed, so Cage dreams of it.

Sometimes at comedies I'm the only one who laughs. Sometimes I'm the only one who doesn't laugh. Most often, all of us laugh. I saw *Raising Arizona* in a crowded theater, and *nobody* laughed—from beginning to end. Audience reaction isn't criticism; still . . . .

Send out the clowns.

"Permissive realism" is a term that might denote most violent action pictures these days. In Hollywood's past, as in the theater's past, melodramatic endings were common, but they were usually of a piece with the beginnings. The whole show was lifted to the terrain of a convention where the impossible could happen. (Eric Bentley: "Melodrama is the naturalism of the dream life.") In the last decades, consistency in melodrama has gone. An action melodrama starts with the most finicky realism—of setting and detail and dialogue—and continues so for a while, then ends in a blaze of wildest fantasy. Take *Lethal Weapon*, for instance. (Don't take it for anything else.) It's about two L.A. detectives in the homicide squad, is chock-full of police minutiae, and goes to the trouble of describing one of the partners, Mel Gibson, as a man under stress with suicidal tendencies—at least some sort of realistic character. At the end of the film, Gibson is captured by the bad guys; is hung up by the wrists while a skilled torturer repeatedly applies excruciating electric shocks to his chest; overpowers the torturer by butting his head with his own, then strangling him with his legs; frees himself; bursts into the room where his partner and his partner's daughter are being held by a half-dozen bad guys; grabs a gun and shoots most of them; frees father and daughter; automatic gun in hand, chases a fleeing villain into teeming L.A. traffic and exchanges fire with him; loses the villain; chases him in a police car with his partner to his partner's home; crashes through the side of his partner's home in the car and captures the villain; then, as a gallant gesture, invites the villain to one-on-one combat (both are Vietnam vets); fights it out while policemen ring the combatants and don't interfere; ultimately wins.

How much more permissive could realism get?

In the world history of cinema, which director would end a film with an aging

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Man Facing Southeast. Argentine. Written and directed by Eliseo Subiela. Script, about a mental patient who may/may not be from outer space, is fair. Direction is exceptional: mature and perceptive. (Reviewed 4/6/87)

Outrageous Fortune. Silly spy chase made enjoyable by bright dialogue and performances—Shelley Long, delicately goofy, Bette Midler, overwhelmingly vulgar. (3/2/87)

Swimming to Cambodia. Jonathan Demme directs Spalding Gray's one-man show tactfully, so that Gray's wit and reticent melancholy come through in this account of the making of *The Killing Fields.* (3/23/87)

Tin Men. Nickname for Baltimore salesmen of aluminum siding, 1963. A creaky sitcom at center, surrounded by wonderfully live banter and bickering. (3/30/87)

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man alone, slowly peeling an apple in one long spiral peel? And make the moment an epitome of the man's pain and the inevitable loneliness of life? Anyone who knows the work of Yasujiro Ozu, even if he or she doesn't specifically know *Late Spring*, in which the apple-peeling occurs, will recognize the ability to concentrate on the commonplace and enlarge it cosmically. "To see the world in a grain of sand" was the credo of no film artist more than, as much as, it was of Ozu.

The close of *Late Spring*, along with many other representative clips from Ozu films, is in an excellent documentary about him, made in 1983 by Kazuo Inoue, who worked as Ozu's assistant. It's called *I Lived, But . . . .*, which is a gentle joke on three Ozu titles: *I Graduated, But . . . .*, *I Flunked, But . . . .*, and *I Was Born, But . . . .* Shot in rain-fresh color by Yuharu Atsuta (an Ozu veteran) and Kitaro Kanematsu, the film consists of intercut interviews, supplemented by relevant excerpts from the films, from home movies, and from newsreels, and by stills. Some of Ozu's surviving family—he died in 1963—are interviewed, as are some of his assistants, actors, script collaborators, designers. Also two critics.

These reports combine to portray a big, burly, hard-drinking yet dedicated disciplinarian whose long career, which began in 1920, went through different phases until, though in his early career he may not have known he was moving toward it, he achieved gigantic simplicity.

On a double bill with *I Lived, But . . . .*—at the Film Forum in New York, anyway—is *The Only Son* (1936), clips of which are in the documentary. It was Ozu's first talkie. (The Japanese word for talkie is "talkie.") This is the only print currently available; it's blotted and haphazardly subtitled, but I'm grateful for it. It shows that by 1936, at any rate, Ozu knew where he was heading.

The story is a sketch for his masterpiece *Tokyo Story* (1953): a small-town mother visits her grown son in Tokyo and is disappointed in his status. More important, the style is growing toward the exquisite artistry Ozu perfected in his subsequent films. In the documentary he says that he is interested in the transience of life and in allowing silences in which it can be perceived. That is this film's ruling idea. Also evident, besides the much-noted *tatami* shots (the

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tatami is the floor mat on which Japanese sit) that see the Japanese home as the Japanese see it, is Ozu's insistence that his characters share the world with the objects in their world. The opening shot is a lamp; the last is a wooden gate. If *The Only Son* were the work of a lesser director, it would be wonderful, unique; with Ozu, it is a promise of perfections to come.

American intellectuals observed.

STALLED THINKERS

BY TZVETAN TODOROV

WHAT DID I find striking during a recent visit to New York? The fight against drugs, whose "technical" weapons range from bombs to the death penalty, and whose result is a moral crusade; electoral campaign themes—work, the family, and the country—that sound unpleasantly familiar to anyone coming from France (*travail, famille, patrie* was the motto of Maréchal Pétain); Secretary of Education Bennett's lofty speeches in defense of religious values; the attempt to impose, through a Supreme Court ruling, the teaching of a "creationist theory" alongside the "evolutionist theory" in biology courses (for the new "revisionists," Adam and Eve are a hypothesis on a par with Darwin's monkeys); the freedom of speech debate (whose participants include the pornophiles of the *Village Voice* and the new president of Yale University).

I think all these issues have at least one common denominator: they arise from a sense of unease about the nature and role of values in society. The country of triumphant individualism may once have been convinced it could get around this problem; it is no longer sure of this, but it has little idea where to go next or how to get there. Every society contains a group—its intellectuals—whose vocation is, precisely, to examine that society's relationship to its values by either exalting, criticizing, or modifying them. Could the ancient field of Morals be coming back to life? Or is it merely a luxury market designed to employ the talents of Ph.D.s in distress?

To begin with, we should mention—and set aside—the two attitudes most often encountered among intellectuals themselves. On the one hand, there are those who forget even to ask themselves what their role should be. This includes most of those employed by American universities. For reasons that are well known (the extinction of royal families, the impoverishment of popes, the lack of general public interest), the great majority of intellectuals, both in the United States and in Europe, earn their livings in universities. This mixing of vocations has its disadvantages, but that is not the problem. The problem is that in the United States (which differs in this respect from Continental Europe) the university is both geographically and ideologically separate from the community. American universities tend to flourish either in small, well-sheltered cities or else in cushy suburbs (compare Princeton to the Sorbonne, for example, or Stanford to the Freie Universität).

It would be hard to overstate the damage done, both to the community (which gets cut off from its gray matter) and to the intellectuals (who are deprived of their natural food for thought), by these lay monasteries known as "campuses." The colleagues I visit at any given campus know a great deal about other campuses (in particular, who has and has not obtained tenure there: imagine the silence that would engulf faculty cafeterias were this subject miraculously to become taboo) but very little about the surrounding community. They concentrate all their professional energies on methodology (in the field of literary criticism, on the thousand-and-one nuances of deconstruction), quite forgetting about goals (the use of textual commentary, the purpose of "culture," whether or not an author's statements are true and right). Indeed, in order to take French books so literally as to believe, as these intellectuals do, that there is no difference between fact and interpretation, between reason and belief, between justice and self-interest, one must either be completely cut off from public life, or else (a more likely hypothesis) have a professional right hand that ignores what the all-too-human left hand is doing.

In the face of this indifference, other intellectuals often have an equally extreme reaction and decide that they must serve a cause. This conclusion can lead to two quite different strategies. The first, far more common in the United States than in France, consists of serving the powers-that-be—that is, the government. Each successive president is accompanied by his own troop of experts. (In France, the spokesman for the late Socialist government did advocate a rallying of intellectuals, but without much success.) Their intelligence and expertise are placed at the service of their leader, who is by definition always right. In the other subspecies, intellectuals commit themselves not to supporting the establishment, but to struggling against it; in general they content themselves with systematically condemning everything the government says and does. Instead of claiming that Reagan is wrong because his ideas are bad, they claim his ideas are bad because they came from him. This type of intellectual, until recently quite widespread in France as well, now seems to me more characteristic of North American campuses. If intellectuals react automatically, either for or against the establishment, they renounce, to a certain extent, their very identity.

Still, there are alternatives to these extreme and somewhat simplistic attitudes. George Steiner summed them up recently with an anecdote about Sartre. When Sartre (somewhat belatedly) acknowledged the revelations about the Gulag, he apparently declared: Supposing all of this is true; there are nonetheless two possible reactions for a normal human being to have. One is to say, "Ha! I told you so! What a fool you were to have expected anything else!" The other is to say, "Damn it to hell! Another great hope for humanity shot to bits." These are representative of two further roles for the intellectual: the expert in lucidity and the purveyor of hope.

Sartre's formulation of the choice sug-

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gests that he preferred the latter. What he is defending here is utopianism: the conception of an ideal state of humanity, and the attempt to bring it into actual existence. (Communism is currently the most familiar, though not the only, variant of utopianism.) Utopias have always existed, of course, but from Plato to Rousseau their function was to educate the mind and enable it to analyze the world, not to provide a blueprint for the technocrats of tomorrow. The shift occurred in the space of a single generation: between Rousseau and Robespierre, with the latter proceeding to apply literally to (originally) live human beings what the former had considered a mere exploration of the logic behind the state. Since then, intellectuals have felt compelled constantly to produce new utopias, open new "windows on hope," and discover a place that "enlists the imagination."

Yet one can dispute Sartre's statement that the role of intellectuals is to create hope and inspire sacrifice in the interest of a just cause. Apart from the question of whether utopias are realizable, are they desirable? Without going so far as to believe in original sin, might we not surmise that there is something in the human condition that makes it impossible to find a global solution to our problems, to achieve anything but partial improvements? If this is the case, we should condemn not only specific instances in which new dreams are fostered—today in North Yemen, tomorrow in Iceland—but the very nature of the projects that raise these false hopes, which in fact offer only the sinister choice between giving up en route or following through to the inevitable end called Terror.

THE MOST appropriate figure to oppose to Sartre as an illustration of the other choice for intellectuals would be Raymond Aron, his contemporary, first friend and later foe. (These "parallel lives" await their Plutarch.) Aron's position is not exactly "I told you so"; neither does it consist of replacing hope with despair—life cannot continue without some degree of hope. But there is a difference between the massive, global hope cultivated by utopianism and hope as faith in human perfectibility, a process that must be continually renewed, everywhere, for everyone, and that is by definition endless. The social order cannot and will not ever be the sovereign good, only a lesser evil. Aron's ideal is comprehension, debate, lucidity. His goal is to make people think, not believe. Rather than dazzling his readers, he attempts to provide them with all the facts and factors they need in order to make their own decisions with discernment. The difference between these two approaches is connate with the ancient distinction between rhetoric and philosophy, the art of persuasion and the love of wisdom.

Is utopianism dead in contemporary Western societies? I do not dare to hope so. And yet the ever-keener interest in the mentality claimed for Central Europe may be due to the fact that utopianism never caught on there. Central Europe—which, as Timothy Garton Ash observed recently, is an ideological rather than a geographical entity, extending as it does from Norway to Greece—is characterized by two distinctive traits. First, it is composed of relatively small countries, and second, it is surrounded by relatively large and powerful ones (Russia on one side, Germany and Italy on the other). This singular situation explains why its inhabitants find it more difficult than most to be totally blinded by nationalistic illusions, why they have been quicker than most to perceive that any authentic culture is the cross-product of other cultures. This also explains why they tend neither to see themselves as harbingers of a universal hope for salvation (the memory of Alexander the Great has grown fuzzy), nor to believe themselves capable of creating a paradise on earth.

Upon returning to France, I begin to wonder whether all of Western Europe is not undergoing a process of centralization (not to say Balkanization). Europe is a series of small countries squashed between two much larger ones, no longer able to entertain reasonably the hope of dominating the earth, and compelled to take each other into account, with all their similarities and differences. This idea makes me anything but melancholy.

THE GARDEN PATH

The Enigma of Arrival by V. S. Naipaul

(Knopf, 354 pp., $17.95)

> The summer jobs were done. The fallen aspens
> about whose wide tangled spread of broken branches
> grass and weeds had grown tall and dark,
> a separate area of vegetation—
> the fallen aspens were cut up with a chain-saw
> and the cut-logs piled up in the back garden.

Press one foot on the soil of England and the phantoms spring. Poets, naturalists, novelists have harrowed and hallowed it for centuries with their furrowing pens as steadily as its yeomen once did with the plough. No other literature is so botanical as English, so seeded with delight and melancholy in the seasons, from "The Shepherd's Calendar" to Edward Thomas to those wistful prose poems that still appear on the editorial pages of English newspapers. Boundless as its empire became, England remained an island, a manageable garden to its poets, every one of whom is a pastoralist; and if now it has succumbed to the despair of Hamlet, "an unweeded garden that grows to seed / things rank and gross in nature" possessing it, or the malicious midden that is in Ted Hughes, still the provinciality of English poetry through Langland, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Marvell, Pope, Keats, Wordsworth, Hardy, the Georgians, Thomas, is its pride.

Culture and agriculture are synonyms over there. The sense of England is not so much of setting out to see the world as of turning one's back on it, of privacy, not adventure. The lines used as an epigraph above could have been written by the phantom of Edward Thomas, or by others: by Clare, Cobbett, Hardy, even a meticulous Georgian. They are from V. S. Naipaul's new novel, *The Enigma of Arrival*, and they celebrate Wiltshire. They are his homecoming, his devotions. But to those of us for whom his direction has always been clear, this arrival (which, hastily interpreted, elects him to the squirearchy of club and manor) is neither enigmatic nor ironic, but predict-

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able. The final essay examination has been submitted, and the marks are in. Gentlemen, we now have among us another elegiac pastoralist, an islander himself, the peer of Clare and Cobbett, not only in style but in spirit. And if the cost to that spirit has meant virulent contempt toward the island of his origin, then rook, shaw, and hedgerow, tillage and tradition, will soothe him, because although he may reject his own soil, his own phantoms, the earth everywhere is forgiving, even in Trinidad, and rejects no one.

When two long sections of Naipaul's book appeared in the *New Yorker*, I cherished them as the tenderest writing Naipaul had ever done. Tempered and delicate, the mood of these pieces had the subdued subtleties of the weather their pliant sentences celebrated. They were pious in their tribute, and close to glory, to that glory that in Edward Thomas's poems brings us to tears in their natural affections; and they had a bracing, springing rhythm, as cool, as fresh, as pneumatic as moss underfoot. If there was any enigma at all, it was that of astonishment, because Naipaul was celebrating. There was no acidity in his pleasures, no ascetic tartness in this mellowing. Then the book began to disfigure itself. The old distemper set in. The elation and gratitude shriveled and puckered and once again left the teeth on edge, the scour on the tongue.

The Enigma of Arrival calls itself a novel. But unless we are meant to take the novel to be the enigma of all autobiography—that everything recorded by the act of memory is inevitably a fiction, that in life there is no such thing as a hero because a hero presumes a plot—the book is negligible as a novel and crucial as autobiography. Or vice versa, if you like transparent puzzles. The chronology of events, the family names, the geography, all coincide with Naipaul's own; but as we read, mischievous uncertainty irritates us because of the suppression of those things that advance fiction: whether the narrator lived in total solitude in the Wiltshire countryside, and, if the narrator did, whether he avoided, for the sake of art, the temporary solaces of sex or marriage, whether he cooked for himself—because all this happens over years.

If the narrator's only companion was work, the hermitage is made admirable, but only in the way legends are—by a concentrated selfishness, by that self-canonization of the dedicated writer in a hostile world, the misunderstood, the displaced, the exiled, all of whom are becoming as corny as Dickensian orphans, because either every writer is an exile (not only this narrator-Naipaul) or no writer is. What keeps plot and excitement alive in Robinson Crusoe is not the myth of isolation, but the challenge of endurance through ordinary objects, and through the vibrations of such objects the increase of loneliness, the growing scream inside the heart for companionship, or, in another word, for love.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Here is where Naipaul's book sours, because the narrator is not interested in love. He falls neither in nor out of it, and this is a defeat he must accept if he is both narrator and Naipaul. The same lovers of gardens enslaved and finally ignored their empire once they had exhausted the soil that produced sugar for afternoon tea; and so, wondrously broad as the novel begins, it shallows into a fretful murmur, a melodious whine. Trinidad injured him. England saves him.

The book takes its title from a painting by de Chirico. A wharf. An empty city. A wanderer. A dangerous model already, and one that Naipaul has never used before: the art of someone else. More dangerous because surrealism, or metaphorical painting, is the imagination at its most second-rate. It is illustrated cliché: every arrival is a journey, etc. The surrealist tries to disturb us by upsetting formulas, then rigidifies his own. For time he gives us melting clocks, for phantasma, elephants on spiderish legs, hats floating without heads beneath them, infinite perspectives. The worst aspect of surrealism is that it requires so much labor to preserve the evanescent.

Naipaul does not go down that cul-de-sac; he is too much the rationalist, too deliberately commonsensical, too devoted to the parallel lines of history and reason to go after ambiguity, hallucination, and magic. But for the first time in his work we are thrilled by the temptation offered him, a temptation the narrator rejects, avoiding the seduction of writing a novel about that arrival in a hallucinatory port in the Roman empire. Replace British for Roman, Naipaul for the traveler, the autobiography for the unwritten novel, and we have a neat trick, a prosaic irony. An aside, not a hymn. And this aside on the idea of History says simply that a man whose background was that of the degradation of indenture, of displacement,

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has used that background to master his craft, to move from servitude to certainty, and has found that certainty on the imperial soil of England.

The concept of English literature once belonged, naturally, to England. And, synonymously, to its power and its morality. It produced its books and exported them to the provinces. In those provinces the native writer absorbed the best of the language, but also the stuff that came with it, the power and the morals. It was this that magnetized Joseph Conrad, a provincial from the third world of Poland under the peaks of the French, German, and British empires. Naipaul has avoided this absorption with the suspicion of the servant. What is the cost to his Indianness of loving England (because that is what love of the English countryside means)? To whom does he owe any fealty? Ancestors? The surroundings that history placed them in, the cane fields of Trinidad, were contemptible, as they themselves would have to be, having lost both shame and pride. Therefore the only dignity is to be neither master nor servant, to choose a nobler servitude: writing. The punishment for the choice is the astonishment of gratitude, to be grateful to the vegetation of an English shire. Not to India or the West Indies, but to the sweet itch of an old wound.

TO DETAIL THE PLOT of this non-autobiography/non-novel would be to consider it by the very terms it avoids. If nothing happens in it, or rather, if what happens takes place across a fence, or on the far side of a field, that is in fact how life itself is: people betray each other as they do in this book, murder for jealousy, wither into old age, lose their jobs, while our own egocentricity absorbs other people's tragedies as interruptions or irritations. *The Enigma of Arrival* is mercilessly honest in its self-centeredness, in its seasonal or eruptive sadnesses. It is as true as life, in the terrible sense that nothing really concerns us.

So what is observed by the narrator is oblique experience, seen and registered from the side of the eye, the parallel that is another's sorrow, until the end of the book, when the narrator's young sister dies and his grief blocks any sense of purpose. What is looked at—stream, hedge, deer—can be seen clearly, registered, and praised. But it can also be trusted to be itself, its variations not treacheries, its changes vitalizing. The early wonder of the book lies in the vigor of its stride, in its health. Year after healing year passes in the calendar that Naipaul calls his Book of Hours. His delight is treated with exactness, and the growth of pleasure draws the reader in without fancy. There isn't a better English around, and for me this is wonderful without bewilderment, since our finest writer of the English sentence, by praising the beauty of England, however threatened with industrial encroachment, preserves it from itself.

THE BEST LEAVES of this book are touched by grace, and the wonder would have remained if the anonymity of the narrator had remained one with the landscape he cherishes. But the "I," the novelist in the autobiographer, moves from the present tense of lyric verse rhythms to the past tense of fiction, and the phantoms of the old Naipauline trauma—the genteel abhorrence of Negroes, the hatred of Trinidad, the idealization of History and Order—appear at the end of Naipaul's garden path. The self-assurance of the author's direction has to be fortified, dramatized, exaggerated, and so the author's lie begins. Here is Naipaul as an 18-year-old writer en route to England on his island scholarship. He is in New York, and this is how he remembers seeing the light:

> Without the paper [a newspaper] I would not have known that the weather was unseasonable. But I did not need the paper to make me see the enchantment of the light. The light indoors in the hotel was like the light outdoors. The outdoor light was magical. I thought it was created by the tall buildings, which, with some shame, I stopped to look up at, to get their size. Light indoors flowed into light outdoors: the light here was one. In Trinidad, from seven or eight in the morning to five in the afternoon, the heat was great; to be out of doors was to be stung, to feel the heat and discomfort. . . . The colors of the New York streets would have appeared to me, in Trinidad, as "dead" colors, the colors of dead things, dried grass, dead vegetation, earth, sand, a dead world—hardly colors at all.

To whom? Not to a painter. What happens in the summer in New York? Why is the sticky, insufferable humidity of any city summer preferable or more magical than the dry fierce heat of the Caribbean that always has the startling benediction of breeze and shade? Why is this heat magical in Greece or in the desert, and just heat in Trinidad? We move easily from the climate to its people:

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People had no news; they revealed themselves quickly. Their racial obsessions, which once could tug at my heart, made them simple people. Part of the fear of extinction which I had developed as a child had partly to do with this: the fear of being swallowed up or extinguished by the simplicity of one side or the other, my side or the side that wasn't mine.

It was odd: the place itself, the little island and its people, could no longer hold me. But the island—with the curiosity it had awakened in me for the larger world, the idea of civilization, and the idea of antiquity; and all the anxieties it had quickened in me—the island had given me the world as a writer.

Or, more honestly, "had given the world me as a writer." Nothing wrong with that. Despite his horror of being claimed, we West Indians are proud of Naipaul, and that is his enigmatic fate as well, that he should be so cherished by those he despises. But the estimate of his lonely journey toward becoming a writer is conservative. The statistics aren't fixed; they're ignored. His own island, a generation before, gave the world C. L. R. James (a Negro) and Samuel Selvon, and other islands offered the world George Lamming, Wilson Harris, Roger Mais, Jean Rhys, Edgar Mittelholzer, John Hearne, Shiva Naipaul, Jamaica Kincaid, scores of excellent short stories, the poets Eric Roach, Cecil Herbert, George Campbell, Edward Braithwaite, a few hundred calypsonians, Bob Marley, Sparrow, Kitchener. But how weak Naipaul's struggle would seem if it were communal; if his dedication was seen to be shared; if what he felt in his youth was held to be felt in common by thousands of young Asian, African, Canadian, Australian writers from all the former provinces of the empire; if more people knew *Beyond a Boundary* and *The Black Jacobins* (by James), and *The Lonely Londoners* and *Ways of Sunlight* (by Selvon), *In the Castle of My Skin* (by Lamming), *The Palace of the Peacock* (by Wilson Harris), and so on. Naipaul moans about the fact that in our youth the bookshelves of English literature were lined with Penguins and Everymans, when in fact the islands had small but excellent libraries (since they could only afford the classics). Still, he must perpetuate this oblique deceit to appear as a marvel. For who would want to attend a convention of Crusoes, a conference of hermits?

The myth of Naipaul as a phenomenon, as a singular, contradictory genius who survived the cane fields and the bush at great cost, has long been a farce. It is a myth he chooses to encourage—though he alone knows why, since the existence of other writers in no way diminishes his gift. If he doesn't want to play, like the peevish sixth-grader still contained in an almost great writer, he can go and play by himself; but that is not going to stop the game. Nobody draws more attention to himself than a conspicuous hermit, nobody is going to get more applause, more solemn nods of respect. There is something alarmingly venal in all this dislocation and despair. Besides, it is not true. There is, instead, another truth. It is Naipaul's prejudice.

Frankness doesn't absolve him of it. Of course prejudice comes from history, from the hoarded genealogy of the tribe; yet if Naipaul's attitude toward Negroes, with its nasty little sneers (injurer and injured can seek them out for themselves in this book), was turned on Jews, for example, how many people would praise him for his frankness? Who would have exalted that "honesty" for which he is praised as our only incorruptible writer from the Third World?

VICTIMS ARE NOW as articulate as their oppressors, and this is not merely a matter of polemics. Prejudice taints the imaginations of Conrad, of Hemingway, of Greene, as much as it does the adventure novel; and it deserves to be judged with all the japes and apologies of gangs. Joyce, Shakespeare, Dante, for all their clear hatreds, are beyond this self-disfigurement. Naipaul's book, which began as a healing, is not an advance. *That* is its sadness, *that* is its disenchantment. There is the absence of all enigma, for once again those abstract nouns History and Empire acquire a serenity equal to their alleged synonyms, Culture and Art. Over there in the lanes of England, these words survive and refresh.

If the world that Naipaul has left behind for others to care about has, for the descendants of slave and indentured worker, neither Art nor Culture, neither flower gardens nor venerable elms, it is because none of that was given to the slave or the indentured worker. To write about this lack as if it were the fault of the African and the Indian is not only to betray them, but to lie. Naipaul is unfair. He is unjust. And he is unfair and unjust at an obscene cost, at the cost of those who do not have his eloquence, his style. Slavery and indenture were technological concepts, not aesthetic ones. They were part of the daily accountancy of a basically banal empire. But things have their price. The enigma, or more simply the revenge, exacted by a belief in history is that the descendants of the enslaved will revere their servitude if it will lead them to those peaks of Art and Culture, to the heart of that empire, to its pastoral villas, manors, temples, and streets. This makes History and Empire worth all their suffering, if the suffering will produce Art. But the servant's present tense is not Naipaul's pluperfect. That tense has been refined, rewritten, judged, given an epic sweep, compressed into the precise yet still elegiac simplicity of this kind of epiphany:

I could see, in the documents of this later period, the lineaments of the world I had grown up in. Asian-Indian immigrants had come in the period of 19th-century torpor. As a schoolboy I had assumed that torpor to be a constant, something connected with the geographical location of the island, the climate, the quality of the light. It had never occurred to me that the drabness I knew had been man-made, that it had causes, that there had been other visions, and indeed other landscapes there.

What is this but style without truth? What sort of torpor? And for a hundred years? One had imagined that the 19th century was a bit more energetic—if not in industry, at least in art. And how much torpor were slave and indentured worker allowed? Yet in the pluperfect tense of the 20th century, the descendant of the indentured can elegize the torpor of the 19th. Naipaul is talking about the torpor of the intellect, not about anything as ordinary as work.

One sighs and proceeds to:

This empire explained my birth in the New World, the language I used, the vocation and ambition I had; this empire in the end explained my presence there in the valley, in the cottage, in the grounds of the manor.

This is modest enough to be messianic. But the empire also explained the birth of hundreds of thousands of immigrants, of the language they use, of their vocations and their ambitions, of their presence in valley and cottage on a manor-ground, in Brixton and elsewhere.

NAIPAUL TIRES of racism in Trinidad and returns home to Britain. Not to the Britain of Paki-bashing, or of the race riots of Brixton, but to the comforts of its countryside. This may strike the average mind as the equivalent of a Soviet dissident going home to Gorky, of

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a '30s Jew finding rest in Berlin, of a Bantu celebrating the delights of Johannesburg. Perhaps the Pakis and the black Brits brought hatred on themselves, as so many Third World countries in Naipaul's travel books have brought about their own psychic collapse by attempting to compete with their former empires. The horror in these books, from *The Middle Passage* through *Eva Peron and the Killings in Trinidad* to *Finding the Center*, is the horror encountered in bush frontiers, in the pseudo-cities of Latin America, India, and the Middle East, but never in the central horrors of our century: the concentration camps, the forced-labor camps of Soviet Russia, their scale so much larger than many Caribbean islands, those archipelagoes of calculated, refined social science.

There is the real enigma: that the provincial, the colonial, can never civilize himself beyond his province, no matter how deeply he immures himself in the woods of a villa outside Rome or in the leafy lanes of Edwardian England. And that is not pathetic; it is glorious. It is the other thing that is the final mimicry: to achieve absorption into what is envied not because that absorption is the dissolution of individuality, the sort of blessed anonymity that Hinduism teaches, but because it is only the vain mutter of "I have survived."

As beautiful as the prose becomes in the first chapters of this novel, it is scarred by scrofula, by passages from which one would like to avert one's eye; and these reveal, remorselessly, Naipaul's repulsion toward Negroes. It is a physical and historical abhorrence that, like every prejudice, disfigures the observer, not his object. To cite examples would reduce the critic to the role of defender or of supplicant, would expose him to more of Naipaul's scorn. That self-disfiguring sneer that is praised for its probity is only that: a wrinkling of the nostrils, a bemused crinkling of the eyes at the antics of mimicking primates, at their hair, at their voices, at their hands extended in the presumption of intimacy.

In the 20th century, the languages of all the tribes can sound like a Babel, and that sound can terrify the secondary genius. Therefore that genius hoards itself and its tribal language, convincing itself that amid the echolalia of screaming victims and confessional apologists it must immure itself in the sacred, priestly dedication of being "a writer," but cautiously keeping both callings distinct: writer and priest. Thus the writer becomes his own confessor. He blesses or curses or absolves himself by the rites of his writing, preserving his secularity, his public, his profitable mask.

Shantih to his pen, though, and a benediction on the peace that has come to him after the exhaustions of a world whose features he has still described more honestly than most. In a small hillside hotel whose back veranda looks out on a serenity of pasture, saddle ridge, grazing cattle, and a view of the Caribbean between its bushy hills, I found an appropriate blessing under the photograph of a sadhu in an old *National Geographic*: "Renouncing possessions, sadhus are life-long pilgrims. For such a holy man, said the god Indra, patron of travelers: 'All his sins are destroyed by his fatigues in wandering.' " That is how I prefer to end—to cherish the narrator of *The Enigma of Arrival* not as an enigmatic English squire who has finally arrived, but as the sadhu that he might have become. Peace to the traveler, and calm to the mind growing nearer to that radiance, to the vision that sees all earth as sacred, including his birthplace, and all people as valuable, including Trinidadians.

DEREK WALCOTT

Derek Walcott's new book of poems, *The Arkansas Testament*, will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux this summer.

THE PLOT SICKENS

The Thanatos Syndrome by Walker Percy

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 372 pp., $17.95)

Odds are that when John Updike wrote *Rabbit, Run* he did not have sketches for *Redux* and *Rich* on the drafting table. Similarly, the perpetual return of Nathan Zuckerman is more likely the result of Philip Roth's ongoing self-examination than of any long-term literary calculation. But both novelists are occupied with character and change, so the idea of going back to a past creation is perfectly natural. In some ways it's even heartening, since it suggests that figments can acquire a certain independence, that they may have the power to direct their author's hand.

Walker Percy also seems to be making the reincarnation of characters a feature of his literary practice. First he brought back Will Barrett, the youthful protagonist of *The Last Gentleman*, to play the middle-aged lead in *The Second Coming*; but that title was little more than a sly wink, since the passing of decades, as well as Percy's determined focus on the events of the present, dissolved any sense that a single Barrett was persisting in time. Now *The Thanatos Syndrome* picks up another Percy familiar. When we last saw Dr. Tom More, at the end of *Love in the Ruins*, he was settling in to spend his golden years with his lovely new wife, Ellen. But the calm, like the calm that descends every so often upon the great houses of Carrington and Colby, was apparently not destined to last. "For some time now," says Dr. More at the outset of the new novel, "I have noticed that something strange is occurring in our region." The old knight is already getting his armor out of storage.

To be fair, Percy does oblige his reader with a few connecting strands. More alludes once or twice to his former travails. ("At one time I thought the world was going mad and that it was up to me to diagnose the madness and treat it. I became grandiose, even Faustian.") His wife is still Ellen, and he has kept his psychiatric practice in Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. But Percy could have named his hero Binx Bolling, Lance Lamarr, or anything else, for all that it ultimately matters. For unlike, say, Updike, he has no compulsion to probe the mysteries of character change. Percy uses More merely because it's convenient to do so. He's already been created; he has a past and a profession. And his genial, bourbon-cured cynicism has proved to be a most effective filter for the kinds of in extremis scenarios that Percy favors.

But all those traits, too, are finally vehicles. Percy is a novelist of ideas who

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just happens to have a knack for creating distinctive (if somewhat flat) characters and riveting (if somewhat improbable) plots. His interests and methods have changed considerably over the years. His first novel, *The Moviegoer*, was a Kierkegaardian meditation on the attainment of authentic selfhood. Its thrust was philosophical, not psychological; Binx Bolling's intriguing reflections all but buried the plot. Since then, however, Percy has become ever more venturesome about devising situations and complications that can embody contending concepts. He has decided that it is the reader, not the characters, who should do most of the thinking. And his scope has widened accordingly. The later novels turn from the malaise of individual consciousness to the larger infections of the social organism.

MORE'S SERENITY at the close of *Love in the Ruins* was, it seems, an illusory triumph. At the beginning of Percy's new novel, we learn that he has just returned from a two-year stint in a minimum-security prison for supplying amphetamines to truck drivers. Now under the probationary care of Drs. Max Gottlieb and Bob Comeaux, he resumes his private practice. Still, as indicated, something is amiss. His old patients are showing the most curious behavioral symptoms: an absence of former (indeed any) anxieties, verbal simplification, uncanny factual recall, and, among some of the females, a tendency to "present rearward." Nor is this monkey business confined to the consulting room. Ellen has quite suddenly—under the tutelage of doctor, educator, and bridge wizard John Van Dorn—revealed an almost superhuman ability to compute bridge combinations. She has also lost her former pudency; More finds her striking an inviting quadruped pose in the bedroom.

Though More retails his observations with a characteristically bemused detachment, the graver implications do nag at him. As he says right at the start: "A great scientist once said that genius consists not in making great discoveries but in seeing the connection between small discoveries." More will try to be that genius. Before we've even creased the binding, we have been drawn into his obsessive search for explanatory links. It would be robbing the reader of much good sport if I disclosed the process in too much detail. But some revelation is necessary.

More quickly teams up with his cousin Lucy, one of Percy's many can-do Southern women. As luck would have it, Lucy is both an epidemiologist and a crackerjack computer hacker. Together they map out the geographical distribution pattern of the cases. They discover in progress a high-level (and highly illegal) experiment in social control. A group of scientists, including Gottlieb, Comeaux, and Van Dorn, has been diverting sodium waste from the Grand Mer reactor into the regional water supply. It is, as More later describes it, an "aberrant local initiative . . . people using discretionary funding to run a pilot which might otherwise not be funded and then present[ing] them [the government] with a fait accompli which they can't turn down." The daily news almost makes the author look like a haruspex.

The doctors are armed with some stunning statistics: the suppression of isolated cortical functions by sodium ions has brought about dramatic reductions in crime, homosexual activity, reports of AIDS. Street kids are volunteering for community service. The football team is unbeatable. When More eventually raises the tricky question of ethics, the doctors have a ready answer: they compare their project to the initially covert, and finally beneficial, fluoridation of water. What is involved here, however, is something more like a fluoridation of the psyche—a riskier venture. The doctors naturally want More on their side. They offer him a high-paying research post with perks. But More, old-style soul doctor that he is, cannot be persuaded. He mistrusts any kind of spiritual quick fix. Where there is no suffering, there can be no soul, no grace; God disappears. More, another of Percy's lapsed-Catholic narrators, never says this directly; but anyone who knows Percy's work can fill in the blanks.

PERCY TAKES obvious pleasure in playing More's curmudgeonly skepticism off the slick cajolery of his colleagues. Over the years he has perfected his rendering of the subtle signals of Southern male bonhomie. The procedure is set, but it works. More refuses the moralistic pose; his opponents hoist themselves with their own petard. Here Comeaux has taken the doctor out for a drive and a "chat":

> We're sailing through the sunlit pines, "The Beautiful Blue Danube" all around us. Bob is enjoying himself. He puts a soft fist on my knee.
>
> "Tom, we need you. We want you on the team. We need your old sour, sardonic savvy to keep us honest. You understand, don't you?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Okay, one thing. Tell me honestly. Don't pull punches. Has anything you've heard in the last few minutes about the behavioral effects of the sodium additive struck you as undesirable?"
>
> "Not offhand, though it's hard to say. I'll have to think it over."
>
> "There you go!" Again the soft congratulatory fist on my knee. "That's the answer we're looking for. Be hard on us! Be our Dutch uncle!"
>
> "But what about the cases of gratuitous violence—Mickey LaFaye shooting all her horses—the rogue violence of that postal worker in St. Francisville who shot everybody in the post office?"
>
> Now he socks himself. "You've already put a finger on it!" he cries aloud. "That's why we need you."

The complexity of human exchange has always fascinated Percy (as his two essay collections, *The Message in the Bottle* and *Lost in the Cosmos*, demonstrate). He wishes to understand how two people can be speaking on one level while understanding each other on another. Once we catch on to More's strategically (and psychiatrically) neutral style, we realize that the whole novel turns on these semantically overdetermined interchanges. Their cumulative resonance grows by the chapter, turning what could be a conspiracy plot by Crichton or Cook into a statement of genuine minatory power.

More quite rightly suspects a catch. Too many people are trying too hard to win him over. He keeps connecting discoveries, following hunches. The indicating arrows start pointing to Belle Ame, the elite school run by Van Dorn. There is evidence of sexual abuse. When he finds out that Ellen has left their own children in Van Dorn's care, More decides to visit the school himself. The ominously hilarious climax finds him quite literally giving the whole Belle Ame staff a dose of their own medicine.

THOUGH *The Thanatos Syndrome* reads like a good thriller, it plays for bigger stakes. And in one respect it plays too hard. Perhaps out of fear that a one-track narrative might prevent his message from shining forth, Percy has outfitted the novel with a most perplexing subplot. Father Simon Smith (he made a cameo appearance in *Love in the Ruins*) has shut himself up in a fire-watcher's tower and refuses to come down.

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Comeaux prevails upon More to exercise his therapeutic gifts. But the old priest ("he still looks like an old Ricardo Montalban with a handsome seamed face as tanned as cordovan leather, hair like Brillo, and the same hairy *futbol* wrists") won't budge. He is suffering from some peculiar sickness of the soul. During More's first visit, he moves in and out of catatonia, ranting during his "lucid" moments about Jews and the evacuation of all meaning from our word-signs. "Tenderness," he says, fixing on his interlocutor, "leads to the gas chamber."

IT TURNS OUT that as a young man Smith had traveled to Germany with his father, where they visited with a Dr. Jäger, an eminent psychiatrist, and his two sons. He formed a close friendship with Helmut, the younger son, who was about to join an SS officer school. At their parting, Helmut presented Smith with a dagger etched with the words *Blut und Ehre*. Grabbing More's arm now, the priest confesses: "If I had been German, not American, I would have joined him."

As we know very little of Father Smith, except for his dementia, it's hard to know what to make of this information. But the rest of his tale is perfectly clear. Returning to Germany in 1945 as a soldier with the Seventh Army, Smith participated in the liberation of the very hospital at which Dr. Jäger had worked. The doctor himself had fled, but one of the nurses showed him the *Kinderhaus*, where lethal experiments were carried out upon children. Jäger—musician, scholar, the same man who had expressed his outrage at the brownshirt thugs—had been the chief researcher. "I'm not sure I understand what you're trying to tell me—about your memory of—about Germany," says More. To this the priest replies: "What is there to understand?"

We are in the century of mass death, the Age of Thanatos. Percy wants to ensure that we make no mistake about the moral and historical connection: the logic of the sodium project is, slightly extended, the logic of the Nazi exterminators. *Any* action undertaken in the name of a principle or an abstraction is dangerous. The ethical conclusion is to treat all human beings with reference to their individuality, not their similarity. Percy said as much in an essay on "The Diagnostic Novel" in *Harper's* last June. Remarking on our idolatry of science, he wrote: "As a person educated in science . . . it dawned on me that no science or scientist, not even Freud, could address a single word to me as an individual." The novelist's role is implicitly moral—to make up the deficit, to say what it is like "to be an individual living in the United States in the 20th century."

THE THANATOS SYNDROME manifests this calling with great vigor, even without the counternarrative. If Percy's intent was to intrude the Father Smith chapters as an irritant, as a way of forcing the reader to look past the seductive surface of his novel's plot, he has succeeded. But I can't help feeling that these more loaded episodes could have been worked in with greater elegance. "Tenderness leads to the gas chamber" certainly strikes one as, shall we say, a contradiction; but it does not shock, and it isn't placed in a way that would make it a "lever of transcendence" (the phrase is Simone Weil's).

This problem by no means hobbles the novel. Percy controls his main narrative with great sureness; it is suspenseful, it is provocative, it is witty. Nobody presently writing has so keen an eye for the surreal quality of our cultural topography. Percy is especially good at catching the way that media figures and media usages infiltrate every corner of daily life. Afternoon soaps, Dr. Ruth, Robin Leach, "M*A*S*H" reruns: little escapes Percy's whirring darts. And though his quips are never didactic, we can sense a more serious concern in the background. There's a hint, nothing more, that the happy vacuousness streaming from the screens of several hundred million televisions somehow makes his fantasy scenario less and less impossible.

The Thanatos Syndrome ends . . . well, happily. In the last chapter, More is back in his office, listening to what suddenly sounds like beautiful music: a patient's litany of anxiety and despair. It's a masterful final stroke. For only by this contrast do we register the true horror of the sodium cure: that the end of suffering and dread is for us, paradoxical creatures, the end of the path to awareness. Indeed, as we leave Tom More, old Kierkegaardian soul doctor, back in his element, we feel decidedly better about our own unmedicated condition.

SVEN BIRKERTS

Sven Birkerts teaches expository writing at Harvard University. A collection of his essays, *An Artificial Wilderness*, will be published by William Morrow in the fall.

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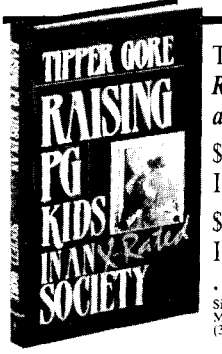

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THE YELLING OF THE PRESIDENT

Hold On, Mr. President!
by Sam Donaldson

(Random House, 260 pp., $17.95)

In the beginning, television journalists were mostly recruited from newspapers. With some notable exceptions—ABC's James Wooten and CBS's Terence Smith are both former *New York Times*men—today's television correspondents started in the very business that has made most of them rich, some of them famous, and recently a few of them unemployed. Sam Donaldson is one of the new breed. He has never spent a day on a newspaper. He started out as a teenage disc jockey in New Mexico and worked his way up the audio-visual ladder—reading the news, announcing, and even doing commercials. Eventually he went to WTOP-TV in Washington, and from there to ABC. The rest is paradox.

Oddly enough—admirably enough—Donaldson has the print journalist's respect for "the word." The word, in his case, happens to be "the question." It is for asking the most probing and sometimes the most shocking of them that Donaldson has earned fame, even notoriety. It is his voice that cuts insistently through the sound fudge of the revving presidential helicopter, that crashes the photo opportunity tea party with a stink bomb of a question, that soars into the picture demanding to know whatever it is we want to know. To hell with the visiting head of state, sitting there uncomfortably and probably wondering if this is the democracy he learned about in missionary school.

That sort of boorish behavior happens to be journalism at its highest—the equivalent of a prize-fighter mauling an opponent. It is never pretty, but it is often exciting. Newspaper reporters find it hard to do, television correspondents even harder. They sometimes have to ask questions before an audience of millions, many of whom will pounce in indignation if they feel that some of the same people who are killing Sandinistas and playing Silas Marner to the poor are being handled roughly.

Donaldson seems oblivious to these concerns. He is immune to Washington etiquette—a terminal primitive who is forever using the wrong fork. He cares only for "the story." It is heartening, as well as surprising, that such a man can thrive in a medium that values blandness. In his charming and disarming book Donaldson rehearses many of his coups, and most of them have to do with the questions he was not afraid to ask either Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan. In fact, the book reads a bit like the written equivalent of a popular composer at the piano doing one of those and-then-I-wrote routines. Donaldson is entitled. He's had more than his share of hits. But as he almost concedes when he writes that "pictures are what makes television news such a powerful communication medium," words do not count in television.

It is instructive to compare Donaldson's account of his profession with Martin Schram's recent *The Great American Video Game: Presidential Politics in the Television Age*. If you want to know about Donaldson, read Donaldson; if you want to know about television and its effect on politics and government, read Schram. It is Schram who documents the importance of pictures. His first anecdote concerns an incredibly long piece that Lesley Stahl did for CBS during the last presidential campaign. For almost six minutes, she documented the Reagan White House's manipulation of television: "How does Ronald Reagan use television? Brilliantly." Stahl then showed how Reagan used television to, well, lie.

"Mr. Reagan," she said, "tries to counter the memory of an unpopular issue with a carefully chosen backdrop that actually contradicts the president's policy. Look at the handicapped Olympics, or the opening ceremony of an old age home. No hint that he tried to cut the budget for the disabled and for federally subsidized housing for the elderly." The piece went on in that vein. In Schram's words, "Viewers were treated to four years of Reagan videos," and the spectacle was stunning. Reagan at Normandy. Reagan with Mary Lou Retton. Reagan with Margaret Thatcher. The president welcoming back medical students rescued in Grenada. Flags. Balloons. And underneath it all, the stinging, accurate words of Lesley Stahl.

After the piece aired, the phone rang in CBS's booth at the White House. "Great piece," a Reagan aide told Stahl. Puzzled, she repeated some of what she had just aired. The president's man was unmoved. "They don't hear what you are saying if the pictures are saying something different."

And very often, the pictures do say something different. They say that Reagan is vigorous and commanding, when he is neither. They say he is decisive, when decisions are the last things he likes to make. They show him coming and going to Camp David, meeting with heads of state, speaking from cards or off a TelePrompTer. But they never show him nodding off in meetings, doodling inattentively, taking afternoon naps, calling pals on the phone to recall old Hollywood days.

Why, you may ask, does television news allow itself to be manipulated in such a fashion? Wrong question. The networks are not the patsies of the Reagan White House. They are its coconspirators. Like the in-house producers at the White House, those at the networks also believe in pictures above all. They cooperate in framing the shots, in getting the "prize shot" that will make for stunning video. "You see . . . I work with the advance man," CBS's 1984 White House producer Susan Zirinsky told Schram. "You want to protect yourself so that you have the best picture possible—that shows you have all the bases covered."

Donaldson seems to grasp the essence of television. But he also thinks that his words—maybe because they are his—overwhelm the pictures. He points out, for instance, that from the time Reagan was nominated in Dallas until his reelection, he did not hold a single press conference. "Instead, his campaign consisted of carefully staged events . . . for the television cameras. Anyone could see what was going on and, in case the audience had been struck by sudden myopia, I repeatedly pointed it out."

Donaldson gives an example. Reagan visits the Grand Ole Opry and Donaldson blasts him:

> The president failed again today, however, to say exactly how he intends to reduce the deficit, if not through higher taxes. None of this talk about deficits and taxes and such is the essence of the Reagan campaign. The essence of the Reagan campaign is a never-ending string of spectacular pictures stories created for television. . . . And today's occurred right here in Nashville at the Grand Ole Opry.

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With that, ABC offered the very pictures Donaldson had promised: "I then showed Reagan with Roy Acuff, listening to Lee Greenwood sing 'God Bless the U.S.A.' while balloons and confetti showered down on them. I concluded: '. . . God, patriotism, and Reagan. That's the essence this campaign is trying hard to project.' " No! Not trying, Sam. Succeeding. The only thing missing from this anecdote is a call from a White House aide saying "good piece."

Your guess is as good as Donaldson's or mine whether such techniques would have worked with a different candidate, or in a recession. Jimmy Carter, for example, was advised by the nimble Gerald Rafshoon, but he lost anyway. Every candidate knows the importance of television. But a special advantage accrues to a politician who is blessed, as Reagan is, with a television personality as warm and avuncular as Arthur Godfrey's. (He even looks a little like Godfrey.) It enhances—it may totally account for—that quality we call leadership. In a television age, leadership means being liked and trusted, and that's surely important. But leadership also includes judgment in policy-making, and that television cannot capture.

The "prize shot" so valued by television news is never of an industrious correspondent such as Donaldson simply standing before the camera, reporting that the president is disengaged, or ignorant of the essential details of his own policies. The "prize shot" shows the president in action. In fact, even the stand-up *du jour* on the White House lawn is usually smothered by a distracting patter of visual dissonance. For instance, a report about the inability of the Nicaraguan *contras* to take the field in their own country will invariably show *contras* taking the field. Never mind that it's Honduras. The driest piece about the Iran-*contra* scandal will show Iranian troops on the move, Oliver North once again walking out of his lawyer's office, and maybe a shot of the fetching Fawn Hall. The joke in television is that a piece reporting a decline in housing starts will be illustrated by film of new houses going up. Only it's no joke. Homes not being built cannot be filmed.

This Sesame Street approach to television news is troubling. At a symposium on television news, held at the Smithsonian, the Stahl piece on Reagan was shown with the sound off, and viewers thought it was a political commercial. Those who saw it with the sound on also thought it was a commercial. Similar experiments have been done with actual campaign commercials: viewers came to the same conclusion with or without the sound. The words were irrelevant.

There is no question that layering a news piece with distracting tracer shots of tape (often file tape) adds to visual interest. The question is whether it is good journalism. The evidence suggests that it is not. Yet the networks do not seem inclined to abandon the practice. Indeed, as correspondents are fired and bureaus closed, there may be a greater tendency to let the high-priced anchorman read a report while a visual montage of film ostensibly illustrates his words. This visual medium, supposedly limitless in its ability to inform, may be limited finally by its reliance on the visual.

In some sense, Donaldson is at war with his own medium: his words vs. its pictures. In another sense, though, he is the complete master of television, even one of its innovators. Out of modesty, or because he does not quite realize what he has done, Donaldson makes no mention of how much he has transformed television reporting. He is the inventor of a kind of theater in which he (of course) stars—rushing in where even Dan Rather feared to tread. Before Donaldson, it was an unwritten rule of the business that the reporter stayed out of the story. If two congressional leaders exited from the White House, for example, it was expected that television reporters and their cameras would face them to ask questions. Donaldson changed all that. He got in front of the camera. He became part of the story. Now others emulate the Donaldson technique, even though some of them wonder whether it is journalism or their own careers that are being best served.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Similarly, it was Donaldson who instituted the White House yell, which is really something of a taunt: I dare you to answer the question, Mr. President. Jimmy Carter could not pass up a Donaldson question, maybe because he was always out to prove how smart he was. For a while, Ronald Reagan was similarly tempted. It is only recently that the president has learned how to deflect Donaldson—for instance, by jokingly feigning a sore throat. In any event, Donaldson got two presidents to rise to his bait, and now he is the leader of the White House yelling pack. Now everyone yells questions at the president.

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Donaldson is an improvisational journalist. He innovates to suit the occasion, leaping or running around barriers erected to keep him and other journalists out of the story. Put up a rope, he yells across it. Start a helicopter engine, he'll just yell louder. On *This Week With David Brinkley* he has gone even further—too far, I think. He voices opinions and returns the next day to his White House beat. In his book, he maintains that one activity should not—and does not—affect the other. All reporters have opinions, he points out, only once a week he expresses his. True enough. But since all journalism is a matter of selection, the viewer is entitled to wonder if Donaldson's views affect his reporting. Never mind that I, for one, do not think they do. What counts is that his appearances on the Brinkley show give others reason to conclude differently. Still, if you like Sam Donaldson, you'll like his book. Buy it or he'll yell at you.

RICHARD COHEN

Richard Cohen is a syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post*.

FAMILY FEUDS

Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and the Life Course in American History by John Demos

(Oxford University Press, 215 pp., $17.95)

I happened to watch public television's presentation of Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* immediately after reading John Demos's book. The play seemed dated, above all by the unquestioning loyalty Joe Keller demands of his son Chris, and by Chris's image of his father. "I know you're no worse than most men," Chris tells Joe, "but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father." That Joe fails seems to us almost a matter of course. Could any man fulfill so godlike a role? And could anyone among the living have once held so unrealistic a conception of fatherhood?

Demos's book helps answer these questions, or at least puts them in perspective. The role of the father, Demos shows, has changed profoundly. He also reports a tendency among even historians of the family to see change as a sign of progress. "It is fashionable," he says, "... to believe that things have been getting better and better as the centuries move along," that life has become richer, roles and options less constrained, and, above all, that "tender feelings" have been given a greater place in family relationships, and that indifference and "outright cruelty" have declined.

Demos has his doubts—as, I suspect, will most reflective readers. The current high incidence of broken families, with their emotional toll on spouses and children alike, hardly seems a sign of progress. Consider, too, the increasing number of children raised by unwed teenage mothers, the evidence of widespread child abuse, and the 160 or more abandoned healthy babies who are bedded in New York hospitals, some for over a year, for lack of certified foster homes—children whose pathetic situation suggests a society unable to acquit its most basic obligations toward the young. Indeed, Demos reports, measures of medical welfare and social policies indicate that this country's commitment to children is "substantially lower than that of other industrialized countries." In our struggle to reckon with such problems, he says, "history has strong claims on our attention. For history, however imperfectly understood, is one of our best aids in discovering what kind of a people we are."

Past, Present, and Personal consists of eight thoughtful, informative, and beautifully crafted essays on family history, the image of the family, the "Changing Faces of Fatherhood," "Child Abuse in Context," the histories of adolescence, of midlife, and of old age, and the place of history in defining social policies toward children. Demos, a professor of history at Yale, originally prepared most of the essays as lectures for audiences of non-historians. The essays therefore summarize the main lines of historical development as he understands them, leaving aside the methodological and technical details that often make the scholarly literature, as he puts it, a "harrowing experience" to read. Footnotes as well as tables and charts are included for those who are interested, but readers can ignore them and still follow the story. The book's contents and style are, in short, appropriate not only for people in the "helping professions" and for scholars seeking an overview of family history, but for anyone open to serious reflections on the family.

Unlike most historians, Demos explicitly incorporates consideration of the present with consideration of the past, and personal experience with historical evidence. "Can we know the past," he asks, "can we even approach the past, by any route save that which leads *back* from our own experience?" In their search for "objectivity" historians sometimes deny what Philippe Ariès in *Centuries of Childhood* called "the dialectic of past and present." For historians of the family, Demos insists, that dialectic is unavoidable. This position does not, however, lead to a "full-blown subjectivism." Demos's use of the "personal" is constrained by an awareness that social practices can be understood only within their historical contexts, and that psychology and the social sciences are useful in unlocking the mysteries of both past and present.

Demos's "imaginative journey" across ages and academic disciplines demonstrates how radically the roles of social institutions have changed through time. Take his chapter on "images" of the family. In colonial America (as elsewhere in the pre-modern world), families were understood as "little commonwealths," miniature versions of the larger society. They taught principles and performed other services of basic importance to the community as a whole. Yet family life itself was rarely discussed; it was taken for granted. All that changed with the radical economic and social transformations of the 19th century. Volumes of prescriptive literature appeared, most of it aimed at middle-class urban families. The image of the family in that literature was new: family life became the locus of peace, orderliness, and caring, a "haven in a heartless world," as Christopher Lasch has put it.

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As the junglelike character of the 19th century gave way to the welfare state, notions of the family shifted again. Today, Demos says, the family is expected to leaven lives otherwise sunk in monotony and meaninglessness. The contemporary emphasis on sensuality and on sexual performance in marriage is part of the new conception of the family. So is the trend toward sharing and openness among both children and parents, which is thought to "deepen" their relationships. Both the 19th- and the 20th-century images of the family—as refuge and as "encounter group"—were defined not in terms of the family's strengths and capacities, but against outside circumstances. The family was made responsible for supplying what the larger world did not provide—and what, unfortunately, the family itself was often ill-suited to provide. The resulting sense of crisis, or failure, is now almost a century-and-a-half old. For the first time in American history, Demos says, there exists today a negative or "anti-image" of the family as an encumbrance to the "full experience of self." For many, the family has become a form of bondage.

MODERN conceptions of the family also have serious and adverse consequences for social policy. The notion that the family should be the primary (and often the only) setting for "caring relationships" has served, Demos argues, to constrict our "capacity for extra-familial caring." That in turn helps explain "public indifference to the blighted conditions in which many families even now are obliged to live," with tragic results particularly for children. "We find it hard," he says, "to care very much or very consistently about *other people's children*."

And sometimes, it seems, for our own children. Those concerned with the problem of child abuse frequently claim that the problem has existed from time immemorial, that only our sensitivity to the problem is new. Demos's careful scrutiny of the evidence suggests instead that authorities in colonial New England were willing to prosecute for child abuse, but that child abuse in its modern sense (the intentional use by parents of physical force to inflict substantial injury on the bodies of their own children) hardly existed.

Moreover, the "classic child abuse complex" seems absent in traditional societies outside the modern West. It

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■ Israel is a democratic country—an open, pluralistic, and egalitarian society. Different religions, cultures, and social traditions co-exist. Protection of such diversity is embedded in Israeli's traditions and confirmed by the government. Seventeen per cent of the total population (700,000 people) are non-Jews, most of them Arabs, and some Druze. Like all other Israeli citizens, they have full rights to vote and to hold elective office. Both Arabs and Druze hold seats in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. Every Knesset, since the founding of the state in 1948, has had Arab and Druze members. All transactions in the Knesset are simultaneously translated into Arabic, and Arab members may address the Knesset in their own language.

■ It is official policy of the Israeli government to foster the language, culture, and traditions of the Arab minority, in the educational system and in daily life. Arabic is an official language in Israel, together with Hebrew. Israel's Arabic press is the most vibrant and independent of any country in the region: there are more than 20 Arabic periodicals. They publish what they please, subject only to the same military censorship as Jewish publications. There are daily TV and radio programs in Arabic. Arabic is taught in Jewish secondary schools. Israeli universities are renowned centers of learning in the history and literature of the Arab Middle East.

■ Education and literacy of the Arab population in Israel is as high and probably higher than in any Arab country. The literacy rate among Israeli Arabs is 95%, virtually the same as for Israeli Jews. There are some 700 Arab educational institutions in Israel, with about 200,000 students—17 times as many as in 1948, when the State of Israel was created. 90% of Arab children attend school, probably the highest ratio of any Arab population anywhere. Israeli universities and technical institutions are freely available to the Arab population. About 3,000 Arab students attend such schools.

■ All religious communities in Israel enjoy the full protection of the State. Israeli Arabs—Moslems, as well as many Christian denominations—are free to exercise their faiths, to observe their own weekly day of rest and holidays, and to administer their own internal affairs. Each community has its own religious councils and courts, and has full jurisdiction over religious affairs, including matters of personal status, such as marriage and divorce. The holy sites of all religions are administered by their own authorities and protected by the government.

■ In contrast to the non-Israeli Arab world, Arab women in Israel enjoy the same status as men. Israeli law grants women equal rights, including the right to vote and to be elected to public office, prohibits polygamy and child marriage, and has thus vastly changed the status of women, to far above that of any country in the region. Israeli health standards are by far the highest in the Middle East. Israeli health institutions are freely open to all Arabs, on the same basis as they are to Jews.

■ There is, however one difference between the "rights" of Arabs and Jews in Israel. Israeli and Druze men are required to do three years of military service (women do 18 months) and then serve one month every year until they are 50. Arabs are exempted from military duty and are not required to perform any compensating civilian service. Since the surrounding Arab states, with the recent exception of Egypt, are the avowed enemies of Israel and are dedicated to its destruction, this exemption is granted by the Israeli Government to its Arab citizens, so as to spare them conflicts of loyalty and conscience.

Contrary to propaganda and to what many believe, the Arabs in Israel are full-fledged citizens, enjoy every civil right, and have the same status in law as Jewish Israelis. In summary, they enjoy the highest standards of living and liberty of any Arabs in the Middle East. It is instructive and sobering to compare the condition of the approximately 700,000 Arabs in Israel with that of the pitiful remnants of Jewry in Arab countries. Jews have been living in Arab countries for almost 2000 years. Under Arab dominance, they were always third-class citizens and subject to harassment and to persecution. They were about 900,000 Jews in Arab countries in 1948—now there are fewer than 25,000. But there are now 700,000 Arabs in Israel, as against 150,000 in 1948—a more than four-fold increase. These figures alone would seem to prove that things can't be all that bad for Arabs in Israel.

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emerged only with urbanization, industrialization, and other changes associated with what we call modernization, and it feeds upon circumstances that were generally absent in earlier times. Child abuse correlates, for example, with social isolation, with unemployment, with on-the-job alienation; with rapid changes of a sort that demand difficult adjustments on the part of individuals; with competition within families over who is to be cared for; with feelings of worthlessness and helplessness. None of these were endemic to the large agricultural families (eight to ten children) that lived in the towns and villages of early New England, and in similar pre-modern societies.

On point after point, in fact, the advent of the modern world in the 19th century marks a critical watershed for the American family and its members. It was then, above all, that gender roles first became sharply defined and differentiated. In colonial America, men ruled the home as well as the rest of the world, because only they were assumed to have sufficient reason to overcome the distractions of passion or affection. In the 19th century, however, the home became "women's sphere," a place shaped by women, who were characterized as loving, moral, and naturally given to lives in the service of others. Men's "sphere" was the world or work, the marketplace of capitalist America, which suited their supposed "hard, striving, emotionally invulnerable" character. For women, the change was, on balance, a positive one. Of course the total subjection of self to the service of others exacted a price in the proliferation of "female diseases" such as "hysteria" and "neurasthenia," all of which, Demos says, "allowed their victims to opt out of the prescribed system." Still, at last women gained a distinct and respected role in society.

Women's gain was, it seems, men's loss. No longer did fathers exercise primary, day-to-day responsibility for their children's upbringing (and increasingly children were awarded to their mothers in custody cases, reversing the earlier practice). Fatherhood became, of necessity, part-time; and the father's primary responsibility became that of provider, of breadwinner. In the 20th century, as the development of suburbs further separated home and workplace, fathers increasingly became outsiders to the family, weekend intruders, "bumblers" like the comic strip character Dagwood or Ozzie Nelson of "Ozzie and Harriet"—men who were to be "cajoled, humored, and implicitly patronized by long-suffering wives and clever children."

This telling of the history of fatherhood does not sustain Demos's provocative suggestion that "men's experience of domestic life" may have "changed more deeply than that of all the other players combined." It seems rather the case that the roles of husbands and wives—and, indeed, of all family members—are so tightly interlocked that a change in one role necessarily transforms the others. The entrance of mothers into the labor force, the growing incidence of single parenthood (and particularly of single fatherhood), and a widespread redefinition of gender identities may, as Demos says, have reduced the vast historic gulf between the experiences of men and women. The divorce rate suggests, however, that contemporary society has done little to alter the calculus of competitive relationships that dogs the modern family.

SOME WILL no doubt fault Demos for his disproportionate emphasis on the male experience, or for his decision to concentrate on white, middle-class Americans, with only occasional references to immigrants or to blacks. A more serious flaw lies in his tendency to use colonial New England as America's past. Like other "faults," this bias is no doubt founded in the "personal" perspective Demos consciously adopted: what he learned about early New England over two decades of study is by now an integral part of his life and thought. But because he examines early New England for evidence of modern problems, Demos says little about problems unique to the past, and so unintentionally supports tendencies toward romanticizing earlier times. Again and again colonial New England emerges as preferable to modern America: it suffered no crisis in the family; paternal authority remained whole; child abuse in its modern form was nonexistent; the traumas of modern adolescence and midlife were unknown; the old were honored and respected. Even the Puritans' attitudes toward sex were "more natural, more relaxed, less self-conscious" than those of their modern descendants.

But a very different "dialectic between past and present" emerges from recent studies of the 17th-century Chesapeake, which was in many ways radically different from New England, and which is almost impossible to romanticize. Consider above all the comparative mortality statistics. The first generations of New England men lived into their 60s and 70s. Those in Virginia and Maryland died in their 40s, their wives in their late 30s. Old age was not a problem in the Chesapeake. But broken families were, with children separated from their natural parents through death, not divorce (which became common only in modern times). The example of these troubled people may be of more profit to us than that of early New England.

Fledgling communities in the Chesapeake found unconventional ways to care for the young: non-kin "relatives" often assumed responsibility for the parentless (as would happen later among Southern slaves when black families were torn apart because parents or children were sold "down river"), and institutions like orphans' courts sprung up to

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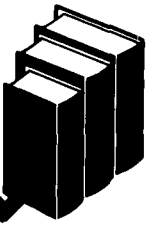

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protect the young against unscrupulous stepparents. The history of colonial Chesapeake (like that of slave communities) testifies to the resilience of human beings, and to their capacity for creativity in surviving circumstances for which previous experience offered little guidance. New England, less experienced in demographic and familial crises, offers less such assurance, and fewer examples of that affective and legal creativity we sorely need.

In his final chapter, on history and social policy toward children, Demos examines his experience as a member of the Carnegie Corporation's Council on Children and in formulating its report, *All Our Children* (1977), whose title, like Miller's *All My Sons*, affirmed a general responsibility for the young. What could a historian contribute to the deliberations of lawyers, social workers, teachers—people whose work brought them face-to-face with the problems of children? The historian's expertise seemed impractical, diffuse, even esoteric by comparison. Demos confesses that the problem still nags him, as it does all humanists who live in the company of practical people working at devising solutions to immediate problems.

Still, if a discipline is useless that asks the questions Demos asks and tells the stories Demos tells, surely we must rethink the meaning of usefulness. Through the centuries, generations of ordinary people have struggled heroically with the most fundamental of human problems—how to acquit their responsibilities toward the young and the old, toward those they love and those they once loved; how to live their lives and face their deaths. In Miller's words, "attention must be paid."

PAULINE MAIER

Pauline Maier is professor of history at MIT.

A NEW SLOGAN

The High-Flex Society
by Pat Choate and J. K. Linger

(Knopf, 301 pp., $18.95)

The High-Flex Society is ambitious, imaginative, and thin. Choate and Linger's premise, as articulated in the introduction, is that two powerful currents are shaping the unsettling transformations in American economic life: "One is accelerating economic change created by new technology, goods, services, markets, and competition. . . . The other current is a dangerous decline in America's renowned flexibility."

Just so, says the reader, savoring an ensuing prescription for a "high-flex" economy, in which, according to the authors, "firms can innovate, invest, and quickly take a product or service [to market], . . . in which workers can secure training . . . be productive . . . and shift between jobs and occupations with confidence . . . and in which government can maintain an environment that facilitates whatever adjustments are needed."

But what follows is a mélange of policy suggestions in general vogue. Some are clever and well articulated. Others are misconceived. Most disappointingly, too few are faithful to the ingenious premise that begins the book. Choate and Linger, for example, are against PACs, on the ground that special interest politics make government *inflexible*. They want tough enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, because equal employment opportunity is good for *flexibility*. One might as well endorse annual medical checkups as flexible, or perhaps oppose them as inflexible. Overdoing a good thing, the authors get a little promiscuous about flexibility. Their idea loses its analytical edge and becomes a motherhood sort of word, justifying anything that the authors otherwise favor. And that is a shame because several of their proposals are provocative. They are also long on policy and short on policy's political preconditions. Anyone can call forth policies from the vasty deep. The political trick is to get them to come when you call.

The book is divided into five sections. The first describes the changing econom-

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ic environment and the remaining four propose high-flex responses. The initial section is unremarkable. A first subchapter, on technological change, recapitulates well-worn material, and where the inferences are novel they are sometimes wrong. Technology, say Choate and Linger, "transforms traditional organizational structures. The vertical integration of a business, for example, has become a cost-effective option for many companies, enabling them to produce what they previously purchased from others." But vertical integration long antedates high technology. If anything, many high-tech companies find it more flexible to buy rather than make, and to joint-venture rather than own. A short subchapter on "Demographic Destinies" points out worldwide population changes—soaring birthrates in the global south, aging populations in the industrial north, two-income families, immigration pressures. It is the sort of fare that would make a modestly effective *Time* cover story—and has.

Section II, commending "A High-Flex Trade Strategy," is substantially better, and surprisingly mercantilist for writers generally identified as neoliberal. Choate and Linger correctly observe that the free trade vs. fair trade debate misses the point. The United States, they write, is a "rule-driven market economy"; the newly emerging economies of Asia are "plan-driven market economies" and "results oriented." Thus, they suggest, our bargaining strategy should emphasize not rules but results, in the form of mutually satisfactory shares of each other's markets and roughly balanced trade accounts. The objective should not be to get other nations to make over their system in the U.S. image, but to assure that the final balance sheet has some semblance of reciprocity.

The United States, say the authors,

> lacks the flexibility to take bold steps, such as closing American markets to selected nations to negotiate the opening of theirs. . . . The long standing U.S. position that a multilateral world requires multilateral solutions is dangerous, for it gives other nations a means of delaying market-opening measures and avoiding negotiations.

In addition to harder bargaining on trade, they call for an adjustment strategy modeled on the Japanese system, to give trade-injured firms temporary subsidies, import relief, and retraining assistance. Some readers might find this chapter less high-flex than low-merc, but I thought it was by far the book's most astute.

Section III, on "High-Flex Business," is back to hodgepodge. The authors argue that the economy needs both manufacturing and services, which of course it does. They also include a great deal of boilerplate about the importance of small business as a creator of jobs, the perils of short-run balance-sheet mentalities, paper entrepreneurship, anti-trust barriers, adversarial labor relations, and the value of pay-for-performance systems to motivate workers. All of this is valid, more or less, but the chapter reads like a medley of a dozen recent hit tunes. It is also, occasionally, analytically careless. Unions, they say, are in trouble because they failed "to define a role that makes them attractive to workers." But surely unions are in trouble because business has such a preponderance of power that unions lack the leverage to bargain for much of anything. Even the most innovative unions are getting pasted. When unions still had the power to get wage increases, workers liked them just fine. Conversely, in today's industrial climate even the most innovative and representative unions are getting creamed.

Their material on "High-Flex Government" is less about flexibility than about policy coherence. Policy-making, they complain, is fragmented. They recommend bipartisan commissions to solve thorny problems, citing the success of the Social Security Commission. They also call for creation of a National Competitiveness Adviser, and a Competitiveness Impact Statement for all "proposed legislation, policies, and regulations." Competitiveness does indeed occupy far too low a priority in national policy-making, but can't we do better than yet another impact statement? There is more familiar discussion of how macro- and micropolicies are out of phase, of how the United States doesn't use strategically the microeconomic levers it has, and how it fails to coordinate its macroeconomic policies with those of other nations; the latter criticism has been substantially overtaken by events.

FINALLY, Choate and Linger call for a "High-Flex Work Force." Choate's current position is director of policy analysis for TRW. (Linger, whose name appears on the cover in far smaller type, is identified as a policy analyst in Choate's department.) Choate is probably best known for his proposal for an Individual Training Account, which has been introduced as legislation by several congressmen. His ITA proposal is emblematic of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. The strength is that the basic insight is exactly on target. The nature of work is changing and so are the demands on the work force. Neither industry, nor government, nor conventional labor contracts provide adequate mechanisms to expedite necessary labor market transitions, or to cushion unwelcome ones.

Choate's ITA would give tax incentives to encourage workers to build up special accounts, modeled on IRAs, with a ceiling of $4,000, which could be tapped when workers need training in new skills. The idea is broadly on the right track. But it has two flaws. First, a voluntary, tax-favored program would be most attractive to the best paid workers. We don't need an individualized retraining incentive so much as a socialized commitment to a broad, active labor market policy. Individualized retraining accounts have the same problem as individualized health insurance policies: them that has, gets. Moreover, as any mature worker who has suffered severe job displacement can testify, the immediate problem is less funding for retraining than maintaining something like the previous standard of living. Choate and Linger hope that the $4,000 retraining contribution would serve as a ticket of admission to the head of the job queue. And it might. But there are very few high wage jobs going begging for lack of a $4,000 retraining subsidy. The more difficult policy challenge is designing—

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Today it's between grapes and raisins.
Tomorrow I'll draw it between twelve
and twelve-o-one. When I was young
I used to drag my heel in the dust,
backing off angrily. Now, on occasions
I sketch it in the air with my hand, to make
a point. It's a fine line—durable,
resilient. It keeps chaos at bay.
It means, Here and no further.
It's never very far away. At night
sometimes, dreams cross, but vanish
at daybreak. I can see my line then,
shining for hours in the widening light
like spider thread.

DONALD FINKEL

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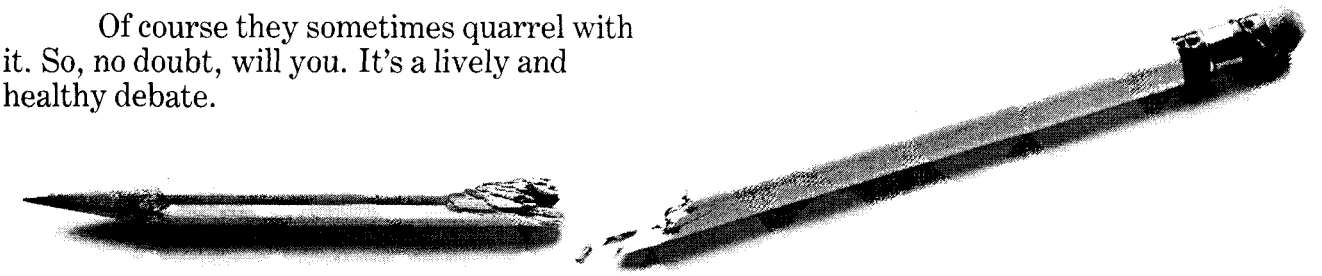

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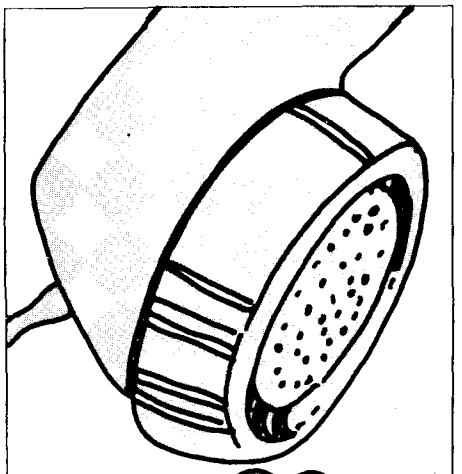

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Their critique of the present unemployment insurance program also misses the point. They incorporate an oft-repeated criticism of economists that unemployment compensation is insufficiently "experience rated"—meaning that unemployment insurance taxes imperfectly reflect the employer's history of dismissals, which gives employers an incentive to lay off workers seasonally and have society pick up the cost. But a critique more in keeping with the authors' high-flex theme is that unemployment compensation is precisely too closely related to work history, and not sufficiently available as a general retraining mechanism. Making UI more experience-rated would make it more rigid. Ironically, they do credit the few pilot programs that are attempting to move the UI system away from experience-rating.

Elsewhere in this chapter are perfectly acceptable calls for remedial education, day care, portable pensions, tax credits for investments in human capital, and better run entry-level training. They glowingly cite one program, from Choate's home state of Oklahoma, that subsidizes training for new manufacturing enterprises, reportedly at only $141 per trainee. It is hard to believe that this outlay goes very far toward refurbishing the work force. Too many of the specifics in the book arouse this sort of skepticism, and impeach the authors' overall credibility.

In sum, this book is richer than many of the raw ingredients that pour into the national policy puree; but the authors did a poor job of separating meat from gristle. Despite their decent instincts and frequently good insights, their book suffers from not enough hard thinking and drifts in its own sea of detail. It indulges the characteristic glibness of the pop-policy genre, which is doubly unfortunate since Choate is one of a small handful of idea-mongers with a great deal of currency on the liberal side of the New Ideas circuit. Choate's earlier work on the hazards of America's decaying physical infrastructure was superb. He and his junior co-author, J. K. Linger, should cultivate the influence Choate has accumulated and do more careful work. As a broad paradigm and a useful catchphrase, flexibility is the best thing about this book. What the book lacks is rigor.

ROBERT KUTTNER

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

REAGAN'S SDI COURT

To the editors:

"Nuclear Shysters" (March 9) was a cheap shot at lawyers. Lawyers are paid to advocate a position in the context of our legal system. No one pays them to expound the truth. It would have been more useful to provide evidence that the Reagan administration's legal interpretation of the ABM Treaty is wrong, and perhaps to focus on the propriety of using such legalistic maneuvers outside the courtroom.

More important, by deploring the right-wing push for early deployment while advocating a "fully funded program of SDI research," you grab for the same moral high ground that President Reagan is finding impossible to hold. The idea of an invulnerable shield against nuclear weapons is universally attractive. But in the political real world, pushing such a controversial, expensive program is a messy business.

Star Wars cannot simply be decreed into existence. If it comes at all, it will come out of halfway measures, political and strategic compromises, and hasty technology. Intended as the ultimate stabilizer, it will threaten the stabilizing factors already in place, such as the ABM Treaty and deterrence in general. SDI is the kind of program that would be perfect if it were perfect, but will be disastrous as it is not.

MATTHEW CHANOFF
San Francisco, California

PEOPLE REVOLT

To the editors:

Having done a fair number of supercilious rip jobs myself, I think I understand the impulse that led Adam Paul Weisman to make light of *People* magazine's effort to document the demise of Liberace (Washington Diarist, "Fifteen Minutes," March 23). But in his eagerness to condemn, he manages to brand me as a sloth and a plagiarist. The February 16 cover that I wrote was not, as he contends, "tack[ed] on to a Liberace story the magazine had run two years earlier." Though I used the earlier story—and stacks of other clips and files—I never appropriated anyone else's words. Dishonest reporting is at least as sinful as pandering to the unwashed masses.

MICHELLE GREEN
Senior Writer, People
New York, New York

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Symbols and Symptoms

AS IN MANY university towns, politics in Cambridge is often symbolic politics. A voter referendum in 1985 declared it a place of "sanctuary" for illegal immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala, though the protection proffered by the burghers of Brattle Street has no legal standing and would be worthless if some hapless refugee tried to invoke it against the INS. By only the barest of serendipitous margins, Cambridge managed to avoid becoming a nuclear-free zone. Too many of its brain workers, like the prosperity of Massachusetts generally, are dependent on Pentagon contracts for their livelihoods. And though it has not yet established a sister relationship with a town in Sandinista Nicaragua, as a New York City school district has, it is one of seven American municipalities to establish a link with a Soviet city—a grown-up version of pen pals. Contingents of Cantabrigians have visited the U.S.S.R. to find an appropriate match. One local wag observed that this process took so long because it was hard to find a Soviet city left-wing enough for Cambridge. But one has been found: Yerevan, the capital of Soviet Armenia. Negotiations have been going on for almost two years, and a final accord apparently will be signed here in May. Now, given the fact that there is a relatively large Armenian population in this area, the choice of an Armenian city was a shrewd one. The Armenians have been a favored national minority ever since Stalin. They have even been able to retain their alphabet. Still, there are amply documented human and civil rights abuses in Yerevan. Greater Boston activists have asked Cambridge's emissaries to inquire into these cases and to ensure that the agreement at least state that no one would be denied access to the proposed exchange programs because of his political views and that communications between the linked cities not be impeded by censorship. The sister city apparatchiks have flicked off these requests with the usual blah-blah about "person-to-person contacts" and "establishing goodwill." But "setting rules on exchanges can cause things to be unnecessarily rigid." That's the kind of flexibility the Soviets like. "We are concerned about human rights abuses in the Soviet Union," said the head of the sister city effort, "as we are about abuses here." Or as the Intourist guide peppered with questions puts it in that old joke: "And what about the Negroes in the South?"

THE EASY COMMERCE in political symbols is another sign of how careless we are with words. We have (rightly) bashed President Reagan in these pages for comparing the *contras* (a mixed bunch, even by my not so unfavorable lights) to the Founding Fathers. We try to be careful about such laden metaphors. So on returning from a trip abroad, I was chagrined to read that "the period from July 1985 to June 1986 was a kind of Prague Spring in the black townships" of South Africa. The black struggle against apartheid doesn't need for its legitimation the moral authority of any other people's struggle against tyranny. But it does no one any good to depict what had occurred in South Africa as a nonviolent reformist stirring of students and intellectuals. It's not only the necklacing that makes the analogy inapt. It's the expectations that are induced by the analogy. Whatever happens in the efforts to change that country is likely to be ugly. And there will be no wistful elegies as codas to defeat—or to victory.

THE BOGEY ABOUT the double, which is to say the doubtful, loyalty of American Jews has been a favorite theme of the nativist right for decades. The Pollard case has now given the canard new life. But the left has not exactly been immune to the uses of the motif, as shown by Gore Vidal's especially vulgar version in the *Nation* last year and by the ongoing aspersions of insufficient patriotism on the part of American Jews by some of that magazine's regulars. It is an anomalous spectacle, this patriotic preening on the left. The very notion of an American national interest to be pursued and protected has been absent from its characteristic modes of thinking; and where the national interest has been recognized there was always the ready argument for why it should be sacrificed to some universal ideal. Often this ideal was a barely transparent mask for the Soviet Union or China or North Vietnam or Cuba or even Nicaragua. "IS A JEW'S FIRST LOYALTY TO ISRAEL OR TO HIS COUNTRY?" screams a headline over an article in the March 22 *Boston Globe*. Even the symptomatic crudity of this question aside, there is something disgusting in the sudden discovery of American patriotism by writers for whom it has never really been a positive value or, worse, for whom it has simply been something to sneer at.

AMERICAN PATRIOTISM WAS an animating motive in the lives of both Louis D. Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter. What Brandeis unabashedly conceived of as "true Americanism" was a mix of Periclean ideals of citizenship and what he called "practical justice" in the law, the workplace, health, education, business, and the relations between sexes and among ethnic and racial groups. Frankfurter was less of a visionary, but his patriotism was more palpable and more existential. It was the distinctive love only an immigrant can feel for this country. Both of these creatively troublesome and towering Americans were Zionists till the end of their days—Brandeis for a time head of the Zionist organization, Frankfurter one of its officials, both of them spokesmen, interlocutors, diplomats for the cause. (It was they who made TNR an early friend of restored Zion.) These were not men who failed to make their intellectual or moral ends meet, and their Zionism was of a piece with their Americanism. But their American nationalism was not narrow or exclusive; it was plural. It assumed, as Brandeis wrote, that much as "America proclaims that each individual has the right and duty to develop," so also does it expect that of "each race or people" that together compose the country. He understood that without Zionism, the fulfillment of Jewish peoplehood, even the Jews of America would be inhibited by the abnormality or homelessness of Jewry from being genuinely free. It was a brilliant insight. The coming of age and the confidence of Jews and of Jewry in the United States, their contributions to the commonweal, are inconceivable without the rebirth of Israel. None of this will be undone by the aberrational case of Jonathan Pollard or by those who are only too eager to exploit it.

M. P.

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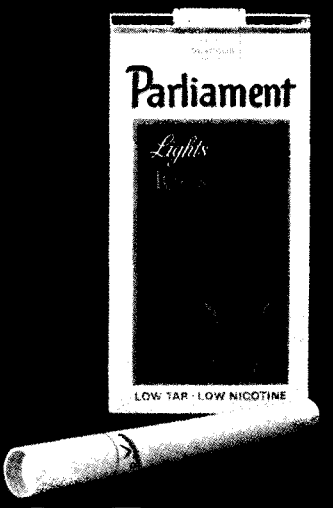

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